









A JOURNEY IN  
IRELAND



# A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

BY

WILFRID EWART

CAPTAIN, LATE SPECIAL RESERVE, SCOTS GUARDS

AUTHOR OF "WAY OF REVELATION"

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

MAJOR, THE EARL WINTERTON, M.P.

UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

NEW YORK : : : MCMXXII

DA 950  
157  
1929-0

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

U  
S  
A

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

©CL.A681542

AUG 29 1922

200 1

## FOREWORD

ON April 18th, 1921, I went to Ireland, returning to England on May 10th.

The sketches and conversations embodied in the following chapters are the result of a journey undertaken with the single object of studying the state of the country and the state of feeling in the country, as to which newspapers contradicted each other and propaganda and partisanship persistently vied. How far this could be done in so short a space of time the reader may judge for himself. I can only add that I made every endeavour to meet and to talk with persons of all shades of opinion and of all classes, hoping that therefrom would emerge a just picture of Ireland in the extraordinary phase—unique, one might suppose, in the history of national movements—which ended with the truce of July, 1921.

Where repetition is noticed or where one



## FOREWORD

point of view or another seems to gain the upper hand, that fact must be accepted as part of the individual experience. For my part I offer no conclusions, nor deliberately sought any. No incident of any interest or significance has been suppressed. Conversations were taken down, in some cases literally as they were spoken, in others salient features or the sense of them were noted immediately afterwards.

Acknowledgments are due to the Editors of *The Times*, the *Westminster Gazette*, and the *Sunday Times* for permission to reproduce certain portions of the book which appeared in their columns.

Thanks are also due to the Editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, and to Mr. J. J. Sullivan, of Cork city, for their assistance in various ways; very especially to Mr. F. W. Ryan, of Dublin, who read the proofs and gave me the benefit of his knowledge and advice.

WILFRID EWART.

July 3rd, 1921.

## INTRODUCTION

I BELIEVE that Mr. Ewart's first literary work was published in a weekly journal, of which I was the Editor. It was therefore with much pleasure that I set myself the task of reading the proof of his latest book. The impression left on my mind by this book is that it represents an honest attempt to record, without prejudice, the extraordinary conflict of views and of right in present-day Ireland. Conflict of views there has always been, more furiously combatant in Ireland than almost anywhere else in the British Empire. Since 1914, at any rate, there have been questionings, in any impartial person's mind, as to the exact moral rights of the different parties to the quarrel. One can hate and detest, as I do, the cowardly, secretive midnight assassinations and outrage,

## INTRODUCTION

often demoniac in its callous fury, that not only was part of the Sinn Fein campaign when at its height, but worse, as history shows, is an ingrained tradition in certain districts and types of character in Southern Ireland; whilst, at the same time, disliking intensely certain acts of the British Government in Ireland since 1914. I will not, however, pursue this subject, as I am anxious to avoid, as Mr. Ewart has done, the ordinary clichés in writing about Ireland: "England never will understand Ireland"; "There are two nations in Ireland"; "The Irish are great gentlemen," etc.—statements so true, yet so banal, and so unsatisfying.

The problem of the inter-relationship of England and Ireland for the last four years has been even more complicated than it naturally is, by external and world conditions. As everyone knows, the Allied statesmen of 1918 and 1919 ran two horses and refused, in racing parlance, to declare to win with either. Those horses were "Internationalism" as represented by the League of Nations, and

## INTRODUCTION

“Little Nationalism” as represented by self-determination. Both horses have had a rare gallop in Ireland. “Internationalism” demanded that the British Government should justify or attempt to justify before the world its action and attitude in what is really a domestic quarrel. “Little Nationalism” demanded that two states should be set up in an island, which judged by every standard except that of the Balkans, is barely large enough for one. The resultant progeny, to change the metaphor, would have been of a character comic in the extreme, if Irish perversity had not made it so grim a tragedy of lost lives and ruined homes.

A perusal of Mr. Ewart’s book strengthens the conviction that the Irish Agreement, at least, offers a chance of conditions a shade less intolerable than those that prevailed before it was reached; because, whilst the glimpse of Ireland which the book gives is only a fleeting one, even a stay of forty-eight hours in most parts of Ireland in the spring and early summer of 1921 were sufficient to

## INTRODUCTION

satisfy any man or woman with two eyes that its condition was a disgrace to civilisation, and an outrage upon humanity.

WINTERTON.

House of Commons, S.W.1.

*March 3rd, 1922.*

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD . . . . .	v
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	vii
CHAPTER	
I. LIFE IN DUBLIN . . . . .	1
II. POLITICS IN DUBLIN . . . . .	27
III. LIFE IN CORK . . . . .	38
IV. TALKS WITH SINN FEIN . . . . .	52
V. TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS . . . . .	69
VI. LIFE IN MALLOW . . . . .	83
VII. SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS . . . . .	98
VIII. KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK . . . . .	110
IX. TALKS IN LIMERICK . . . . .	126
X. GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD . . . . .	152
XI. TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS . . . . .	166
XII. THE TULLAMORE ROAD . . . . .	186

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIII. THE ROAD TO ULSTER . . . .	197
XIV. THE GATES OF ULSTER . . . .	213
XV. BELFAST . . . . .	224
APPENDIX . . . . .	255
AFTER-NOTE . . . . .	259



# A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

## CHAPTER I

### LIFE IN DUBLIN

A MIDDLE-AGED spinster lady, eating a fish-course, laid down her fork sharply.

“That’s a bomb!”

Everybody else in the dining-room stopped eating for a moment. “Yes, that’s a bomb!” they agreed—and went on with their talk and their food.

A hollow “bang” like the bursting of a motor-car tyre had broken the subdued murmur of the evening streets. And in any other city of the civilised world that sound would have been put down to a motor-car tyre bursting. But this city was Dublin and the hour the normal one for such occurrences.

Wherefore, the peaceful inhabitants of the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

hotel went on with their dinner. No one took much interest in the matter—no one except the traveller who had arrived at Westland Row just half an hour earlier. To him it conveyed two facts—that the incident really was a normal one in the city's life and that the bomb, by reason of the hollowness of its explosion, was not heavily charged but was probably a casing detonated.

And, hastily finishing his dinner, the new arrival went out. He followed the direction from which, two or three streets away, the sound had come. He was still expectant of commotion. At the corner of the street two soldiers stood laughing with a girl. Home-goers, a few, were passing along Dawson Street. A tram clanked past. Groups of soldiers, young men and young women, were standing about the north side of Stephen's Green, exchanging leisured pleasantries. A stranger in a very strange city does not like to ask questions, and only once was any casual allusion heard to a bomb bursting at the heart of it.

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

"At the corner of Grafton Street and Duke Street, I think. . . . A man and a girl."

Grafton Street was full of people — men, girls, soldiers. Barrel-organs were grinding out "It's a long, long trail" and other old tunes of the war, and new ragtime ones. Newsboys were shouting "Another Dublin Ambush!" and (in an undertone) "Up the rebels!" Duke Street is half way down on the right-hand side. At the corner one noticed the cracked plate-glass window of a shop and the usual groups talking. That was all.

When night did finally close down and as curfew hour approached, the tide of the people set hurrying over O'Connell Bridge towards the tram junction at the Nelson Pillar. The street lamps were lit and there were vague, shadowy crowds through which one had to press one's way. Black motor-cars containing mysterious-looking men rushed out of College Green at breakneck speed like bats or night-insects.

Half an hour later—silence. I looked out of a window high up and saw spires, chimneys,

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

roof-tops bathed in moonlight, and heard one sound—a rifle-shot.

Next morning, the nineteenth of April, that first impression multiplied.

Turning into Nassau Street out of Kildare Street I looked down the exceptionally long barrel of a revolver, the owner of which was a young gentleman in a dark green uniform, one of a number sitting on a motor-lorry, smoking a cigarette, his finger—visibly—on the trigger. The lorry rattled on. A woman stopped and glanced in at a shop-window.

At the corner of Suffolk Street—a crowd. The faces of the men and women in the crowd—one sought an explanation here—wore a faintly-cynical, faintly-amused expression.

“Hullo! What’s up?”

“Oh! Bagging somebody else’s piano for their own use, I suppose.”

And there they were. Not a gentleman in dark green this time but a tall young man in khaki and a tam-o’-shanter, brandishing a revolver as though it were a hair-brush, and,

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

lounging about the street, which was otherwise empty, half-a-dozen similar young men, similarly armed. Now there is probably no more respectable-looking street in the world than Suffolk Street, Dublin. And yet, sure enough, here was a piano rakishly and mysteriously appearing out of a window, slowly and solemnly descending into the arms of four Auxiliaries standing in a lorry below.\*

One other impression only was needed to stultify the faculty of surprise. That was on Grafton Street. Prosperity, now, is the keynote of Grafton Street, prosperity especially on a hot April afternoon when everybody is out shopping or amusing themselves, and motor-cars and cars and pony-carts line the curbs. One does not expect to see charging up such a thoroughfare, with no more warning than his own clatter, an immense lorry caged in with wire-netting and bristling with rifles balanced at the "ready," by a score of

\* The explanation of the affair is that certain Auxiliaries were removing a piano which they had hired from a Suffolk Street firm, the piano-porters being not then available. The incident is simply recorded as it happened.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

soldiers in steel helmets. One might as well expect such an apparition in Bond Street.

"Vote for Sinn Fein! De Valera expects every man to do his duty!"—that and similar inscriptions chalked on a blank wall in Phibsborough Road told the story of contemporary Ireland.

And that story was repeated every evening, almost every hour of every day.

It was told on the second evening when about nine o'clock a procession—armed lorries headed by an armoured car—tore down Westmorland Street, everybody stopping and staring after them. Next morning we learnt that Police-Constable Stedman had been shot on his motor-bicycle in Henry Street while carrying despatches for the Castle.

It was told on the second morning at Summerhill Parade, when one came up against a loose barbed-wire fence, a couple of soldiers with fixed bayonets lounging idly on the further side of it, and three lorries standing outside a house in a side-street, the inhabitants

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

of which were peering nervously out of their windows. A "round-up" was going forward in the Summerhill district.

On the third evening again, I found myself at Dartry Road, wandering along that favourite footpath of the residents, still more of the local love-makers, which follows the Dodder-stream along a little ravine—and recollected curfew. By the time I reached the terminus, the last tram had left for the city and the alternative presented itself of walking three miles in half an hour or of being "curfewed" and probably arrested. By good fortune, I picked up a jaunting car after running half the distance.

Curfew, that dim relic of English country towns, was the sinister boundary of every Irishman's horizon in April, 1921. And curfew habits had to be learnt. Curfew-breakers were summarily dealt with in police courts. It was a seasonable reminder to see an elderly member of a famous Dublin club peep out of its glass portals after the forbidden hour, then, finding the coast clear, scurry along the street



## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

like a cat to his nearby home. . . . Nor was it an easy matter to obtain a curfew pass even for the best of reasons. I applied for one at the gates of the Castle and was curtly told I should be lucky to get it in three days. Nor when obtained was it an unmixed blessing. In a newspaper-office I talked to a young clerk who possessed such a pass and had been held up in the small hours of the morning by Black and Tans.

“Most of them were drunk, and they swore at me and asked for my pass and swore at me again and loosed off their rifles and drove away.”

It is not too much to say that the young man was indignant. . . .

The abiding impression of Dublin at this time was the recurring contrast between the ordinary workaday life of a modern city and the queer forces which lurked such a little way beneath. The ruined Post Office in Sackville Street was the only standing reminder of what had gone before, although the Gresham Hotel revived painful memories of Black Sunday; to

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

them both now has to be added the Customs-House. Sitting in Phoenix Park of an afternoon, one saw old men dozing on seats, nursery-maids reading novelettes, and the children shouting and playing on grassy slopes for all the world as if Dublin herself were a playground. One passed out of the gates into the North Circular Road and lorries came tearing along at twenty-five miles an hour, their dark green or khaki loads bristling with rifles.

Jammet's, at luncheon-time, was half-empty, yet contrived to maintain the illusion of a segregated and civilised society. Now and then you made contact with Dublin's precious but distinguished intellectual and artistic world and found it revolving around Merrion and Fitzwilliam Squares apparently undisturbed. But if you went to St. John Ervine's "Mixed Marriage" at the Abbey Theatre you found the place half-empty. You might feel that the acting fell below expectations and indeed the theme; you began to speculate already about that other deadly warfare of the protesting North.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

And you came out in the dusk to find Dublin's warfare staring you in the face on Eden Quay, where, outside Mooney's public-house, groups of men and youths lounged and spat and smoked. Was it not from this corner that bombs were thrown last Sunday night? . . .

On fine afternoons the white-flannelled students play cricket on the grassy lawns of Trinity College, a stone's throw from Nassau Street. And as you stood, one of a group, watching them through the railings, through an opening in the foliage, you could not foresee that from here a fortnight hence revolver-shots would be fired, or that the daisy-sprinkled bank would be stained by a girl's blood.

The interior of Dublin Castle presented itself as a hive from which, as one passed up-country, all subsequent activities sprang. In and out of the great gate, with its ramshackle flankments of barbed wire and sandbags, a constant procession of armoured cars, lorries, tenders, and Ford cars passed. The Ford cars themselves and their occupants—two or four

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

commonplace-looking individuals in soft felt hats and macintoshes—attached to themselves, after a while, a peculiar significance. In the wide courtyard, scene of so many mysterious happenings—curtain-raisers to greater dramas or to the Hereafter—rows of the now familiar lorries and cars stood grilling in the sunshine, their green or khaki crews smoking cigarettes, joking, fingering their revolver-holsters. In their midst, or sitting on one of the lorries, a row of nondescript-looking civilians—spitting.

The whitewashed guard-room on the right of the gate where you signed your name—that had its associations. One day, they told you, two rebel-leaders, sitting amicably with their guards by the fire, sprang for the door, and, shot or bayoneted, were killed.

Within the buildings, soldiers, staff-officers, and officials bustling to and fro: it resembled a General Headquarters in the Great War. One was ushered into a room where elderly, bearded men sat scribbling shorthand on pads balanced on their knees and young be-spectacled men scribbled shorthand on pads, as they

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

stood. A monotonous voice was reciting, sentence by sentence:

“Crown Forces operating Thursday on the Kerry-Limerick border called upon three civilians at Knocktoosh to halt. Two of them failed to do so. . . .”

“A party of eight R.I.C. police from Castlebar, Co. Mayo, travelling in a motor-car, were ambushed at 6.30 a. m. . . .”

The monotonous voice was punctured by the still more monotonous “tap-tap-tap” of a typewriter in an adjoining room.

A short, clean-shaven man wearing glasses presented himself and led the way out to the inner courtyard of the Castle. He was Mr. Basil Clarke, the mouthpiece of the Irish Government through the sieve of whose intelligence all Irish news (and all propaganda) passed. We paced up and down the colonnade while I explained my project.

Mr. de Valera's Proclamation to the Irish people had appeared that morning. The Castle representative drew attention to two points in it:

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

(1) The appeal to the Electorate to vote on the issue of a Republic. (This was answered within a month by the unopposed return of Sinn Fein candidates for the Southern Parliament.)

(2) That passage in the Proclamation which ran:

"The policy of Sinn Fein . . . stands for the right of the people of this Nation to determine freely for themselves how they shall be governed, and for the right of every citizen to an equal voice in the determination; it stands for civil and religious equality, and for the full proportional representation and all possible safeguarding of minorities. . . ."

This was interpreted as a direct reference to Ulster's claims.

In reply to an inquiry regarding the likely result of negotiations then believed to be taking place, my candid informant said:

"You may take it that negotiations—indirect, of course—have gone on continuously since last June (1920), but it has always seemed as though an extremist wing of Sinn Fein intended to wreck them. Whenever they seemed like succeeding, some particularly vio-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

lent outrage has taken place which caused the Government to stiffen their backs for fear of seeming to give way to murder."

"Couldn't a truce have been fixed up but for Lloyd George's stipulation about the giving up of arms?"

"Perhaps. The question of an amnesty as regards Collins, Mulcahy, and the two others remains the difficulty, though."

I inquired whether Russian money was believed to be at the back of the Sinn Fein movement as alleged by the Duke of Northumberland and Lord Carson.

"It cannot be stated definitely. Bolshevist money may reach Sinn Fein through the Irish Labour Party or through Sinn Fein agents who are in touch with Moscow. The alliance between Sinn Fein and Labour is an *affaire de convenance* because Labour holds Sinn Fein's strongest weapon—the transport strike. They remain nevertheless separate and distinct movements."

At the conclusion of our conversation I was informed that if I wished to proceed with my



## LIFE IN DUBLIN

journey an official pass would be granted (if desired), and that the Castle would answer for me if arrested by Crown Forces.

I thereupon repaired to the nearest photographer's and, armed with his frightful disclosures, made my way to G.H.Q., Parkgate. Here a benevolent major went through the passport process so familiar to visitors at Lake Buildings, St. James's Park, recording one's every physical feature with embarrassing accuracy. He then, with a few cautionary words, handed me my pass, together with his blessing.

My first acquaintance with the "Irregular Forces" (in an irregular capacity!) came about in an untidy little restaurant near College Green. In the street a barrel-organ was grinding out its inevitable tale of ragtime, but above that turgid *repertoire* could be heard sounds of singing, laughter, and dancing feet in which every now and then a feminine voice predominated.

In answer to my question the waiter winked.

"They have a lot of drink taken," he re-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

marked, merely adding that they were "some of the boys."

I thereupon caught a glimpse through the half-open door of a young person in civilian clothes dancing by himself in the middle of the room, brandishing a bottle.

Presently half-a-dozen young men and maidens came tumbling out of the room, laughing and swearing pleasantly. One was rather drunk.

Meanwhile two Auxiliaries in uniform sat at a table by the window, puffing at cigarettes, gazing boredly down into the street. . . .

There was civility and to spare in the shops, but when you walked about the triangular area between Talbot Street, Amiens Street and Railway Street, you encountered that furtive, half-cowed and half-hostile attitude of the people which subsequently dogged your footsteps through Ireland. There are slums as bad no doubt in Bethnal Green, but by morning light the people of this oldest quarter of Dublin wear a shamed look as their houses do, as the grey, peeling walls and dirty striped mattresses

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

hanging out of window do, as those wretched creatures in shreds of cloth or shawls, down-at-heel slippers, and frowsy hair, those hordes of filthy children happy in their ignorance and their super-abundant humour do. Only once have I seen a place more nakedly expressive of human depravity, and that not in London or Paris but in North Dublin among the refuse heaps near the Great Northern railway line. Here things like wasps crawl on mountains of rubbish, their creeping movements alone distinguishing them from the old tins, the scraps of paper and the rags. They are old men, women, girls, children—Dublin's ghouls.

Tyrone Street has contributed its quota to the Irish Republican Army, no doubt; but Tyrone Street has changed its name. During the war it contributed its quota to the British Army (for no very patriotic reason), but in the Irish regiments a "Tyrone Street man" was a particular kind of man. He was known of all recruiting sergeants, rejected if possible, marked. Experienced N.C.O.'s recognised a "Tyrone Street man" as much by his under-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

sized physique as by certain Irishisms he used, which are apparently copyright in Tyrone Street. But—Tyrone Street is no more!

My stay in Dublin was prolonged by unsuccessful endeavours to get into touch with the Sinn Fein Executive, from whom I hoped to obtain some assurance before starting up-country. The value of an introduction from London to the Republican Minister of Publicity had been somewhat reduced when this gentleman was found to be inhabiting the Internment Camp at the Curragh.

Things began to look more promising, however, when I was directed (from an influential source) to an individual described as being on the "outer inner ring" of the movement. This gentleman (who, by the way, was interned a week or two later) I found occupying a villa on the western outskirts of the capital. I was shown into a drawing-room, agreeably schemed in mahogany and dull red, surrounded by shelves heavily book-laden. A sharp-eyed, wizened-looking little man wearing trouser-

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

clips presently appeared, announcing that he was in a hurry to attend a meeting in the city. I explained my desires and he informed me that my request would be placed before the meeting. The next time I was to catch sight of the gentleman was some months later in Whitehall, when he was attending upon his chief at a "conversation" with the Prime Minister.

I subsequently received a telephone message to the effect that a messenger would meet me at Kingsbridge a few minutes before the departure of the afternoon train to Cork. No messenger appeared, however. I again postponed my departure.

Next morning I applied in another quarter. This effort, too, was to prove fruitless, but I became hereby acquainted with the strange story of Mr. H. This story is reproduced with reserve as to its implications; its interest lies in the baleful but revealing light which it seems to shed upon the Ireland of that day.

On a certain afternoon of September, 1920, a number of journalists were summoned to a

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

house in Dublin where, it was intimated, something interesting was about to happen. My informant was one of them; the party also included representatives of well-known English, American, Italian, and French newspapers. On arrival they found the Republican Vice-President, Mr. Arthur Griffith, who, after some general conversation, announced that he expected a visitor and that this visitor had an important proposition to develop. The proposition was none other than the betrayal of the chief of the English Secret Service to Sinn Fein.

"He has asked me," Mr. Griffith went on, "to let him meet leaders of the movement, especially on the military side, and he is coming here this evening imagining that he is to meet some inner council of the Sinn Fein movement. I believe he is only one of a number of men acting as *agents provocateurs* throughout the country. I will let him tell you his own story, but I would ask the foreign gentlemen present not to speak much, lest the man's suspicions be aroused."

A knock at the door, and the expected visitor—a fair-haired, heavy-jowled man of about 50—entered. Though warmly welcomed he appeared slightly nervous and, as my informant remarked, “modestly lowered his eyes.” At Mr. Griffith’s request he proceeded to tell his story.

He was an Englishman, he announced, but hated England and detested the English Government so much that when rumours of conscription arose, he fled to Ireland.

“You know,” he remarked, “I would sooner be shot dead than fight for England.”

He preferred attending race-meetings in Ireland. “For,” said he, “I’m a bit of a sportsman.” And he told of his imprisonment in the cause of Irish freedom. Up in Derry he had taken part in a raid for arms by Sinn Fein Volunteers, and had had the misfortune to be captured and sentenced to five years’ penal servitude.

“How did you escape from Maryboro’?” somebody inquired.

“H. settled himself comfortably in his chair

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

and spoke glibly for five minutes in his cosmopolitan accent," was my informant's description. It happened in this way. H.'s father was a prominent Freemason; he had also held an important position on King Edward's yacht. "In addition," H. added, "I myself was special shorthand writer to the Duke of Connaught in Canada. So I had influential connections and wrote to some friends in London who got me released last year."

The tale proceeded. Looking for work on his return to London, H. was advised to seek out a certain Captain T. in the Charing Cross Road. This gentleman offered him an appointment in the English Secret Service at 30s. a day with special bonuses for information obtained. Meetings were arranged in Dublin—one on Kingston Pier, another at the foot of the Wellington Monument in Phoenix Park. Recognition on these occasions was by signs only, H. having been cautioned to have no relationship of any kind with Dublin Castle or the Irish Detective Service. Captain T., however, at some time produced a photograph of



## LIFE IN DUBLIN

Michael Collins, the Republican Minister of Finance.

At this point of the narrative, one of the supposed "inner ring" inquired what might be done in the matter.

The answer was that a meeting might be arranged with Captain T. on the West Pier at Dun Laoghaire. "It is a very lonely spot during most hours of the day." He would advise Sinn Fein of the date and hour, and they could then "get" this alleged Chief of the English Secret Service.

"For T.," the spy was at pains to add, "is the man responsible for all the dirty work in Ireland and holds the strings of all the Secret Service operating against the Sinn Fein movement."

A moment's silence followed these sinister remarks.

Other names were mentioned. Lord Carson was one of them. Information could be supplied as to his movements, and so it could as to the movements of Sir Hamar Greenwood. Ulster Arsenals could be unmasked in Derry.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

There was a proposition relating to a house near Tramore which was shortly to be raided by the military for arms. Only three lorriesful were to be sent—why not a greater force of Volunteers to “disarm” the soldiers?

Horror with difficulty disguised itself in the faces of the listeners as these cold-blooded proposals came out one by one.

The real purpose of the alleged *agent provocateur* revealed itself at last. Would it not prevent the English Secret Service chiefs becoming suspicious of him if he were furnished with a certain amount of “genuine information”: if he could report, for instance, that Mike Collins was in a certain place on Wednesday and hold back his report until Friday. He would gain the support of his superiors, wouldn't he, and be able further to assist the Sinn Fein movement?

“And of course,” he added, “no harm would come to ould Mick!”

“He was a very stupid man,” was my informant's comment.

Mr. Griffith rose.

## LIFE IN DUBLIN

“Well, gentlemen,” he said, “you have heard this man’s proposal and can judge for yourselves. Mr. H. has told you one version of his career—I will tell you another.”

Picture the scene: the Republican leader quiet and nonchalant, impenetrable behind his glasses; the circle of journalists—the “inner Council of Sinn Fein”—shocked, almost painfully expectant of what was coming; the central figure, startled, pale, suddenly and terribly frightened.

Mr. Griffith proceeded to relate a history of crime. Forgery and fraud, embezzlement, petty larceny, two sentences of seven years’ penal servitude each, a sentence of five years’ penal servitude passed on December 8th, 1918, at Belfast Assizes *for a series of frauds*. Such was H.’s record. During the recital the wretch’s mouth twitched and his hands shook. Mr. Griffith ended the long narration with these words:

“You are a scoundrel, H., but the people who employ you are greater scoundrels. A boat will leave Dublin to-night at nine o’clock. My

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

advice to you is—catch that boat and never return to Ireland. You may use your peculiar talents as you like in your own country. I have nothing more to say.”

Crushed and frightened, the man protested in a piteous tone that he had never done anything against Sinn Fein. He could not leave Dublin that night.

The Sinn Fein Vice-President indicated the door and the spy walked quickly from the room. . . .

He left for England by the night-mail.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICS IN DUBLIN

**I**N a red-brick Georgian house on Merrion Square, which compares with the best in Bath or Brighton, and to which my prolonged stay in Dublin presently led me, "Æ." presides like the reincarnation of an ancient Irish bard. And George Russell stands for a large section of Ireland, not alone by the essentially Irish quality of his mind but by reason of his significant presence, the stature of the man, the massive head and nut-brown beard. Even the room in which he receives you is atmospheric and individual—calm, sombre-tinted, mellow.

"All governments are rotten—though their individual members may be honest men—because they act not upon what is right but in obedience to forces more powerful than themselves. . . . We Irish have no hatred of the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

English; our hatred is of the English Government which treats Ireland, and has so treated her through centuries, as a slave race."

We sat in front of the fire, "Æ." wearing a shamrock-green tie. There was green in the room, too, green against a prevailing note of brown. The poet spoke forcibly—deliberately, yet without hesitation—and with a remarkable precision of English.

"It's difficult for one man to speak for a whole nation. . . . We do want independence. But if the Government would frankly call a free conference and proclaim a truce, making at the same time a definite offer, something might be done."

"May I ask what you call an 'offer'?"

"If Ulster would come into the Dominion of Ireland as a federated State, and if all the rights that Canada has or that Australia has were granted us, we might reconsider the question of separation."

"And the Army and Navy—foreign relations?"

"We must have control of our ports. And

## POLITICS IN DUBLIN

why a British garrison in a free country? Foreign relations must be our concern as much as the concern of Canada, Australia, and South Africa—no more and no less.”

“What about fiscal autonomy?”

“If Ireland wanted to put a duty on certain English goods, English manufacturers would no doubt raise a howl. That cannot be helped. We must be a Dominion State in fact as well as in name. Besides, England and Ireland are an economic unity and are bound to remain so for a long time. I think it would be folly to start a tariff war.”

“Who wants the Government of Ireland Act?” “Æ.” demanded in reply to another question. “Why, of 102 Irish M.P.’s not one has voted for it!”

He went on to speak of the rank and file of the Irish Republican Army as being “inspired by a mystical passion of nationality,” adding that “mistakes” had been made by particular groups. He spoke of the forebodings of that Sunday evening when, returning home, he heard of the fifteen assassinations.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

"That," he declared, "was a bad day for Ireland."

These exchanges led to a discussion upon the policy and methods of the I.R.A.

How did he explain the motives and psychology of men who could kill their opponents in cold blood—opponents, moreover, who were engaged (though at Dublin Castle) on work like map-making and not on Secret Service?

"Personally, I am not in favour of violence," was the reply. "But you fought in the war, didn't you? Well, the I.R.A. men consider themselves to be fighting for their country's integrity and freedom just as much as you did during the war with Germany. As to the murders, you must have seen Germans shot in cold blood—prisoners, for instance? Such things happen in war and always will. People in England seem to forget or not to realize that a state of war prevails in this country."

Our Curfew Parliament, which assembled nightly before the hotel fire, was not so luminous as the author of "Imaginations and Rev-



## POLITICS IN DUBLIN

eries" in his quiet study. But it expressed perhaps more truly because more chaotically the Dublin of that day. Here one received a first schooling in the necessities and reservations of a politics-ridden country. And for all the affability and the drawing-up of chairs, one detected at first a certain stricture in the conversation, a readiness on the part of everybody, unusual in England, to explain his position and business, and way of life. From which one inferred that a similar frankness was to be expected of oneself. Until this frankness was established indeed, politics, when touched upon, were avoided or adroitly dropped. Gradually, however, the little company warmed to a measure of confidence, though the Irish lawyer kept his own counsel and the American consular official contributed little. Definite expressions of opinion, indeed, evoked unresponsive surprise, so that, offering them, one was left "in the air," with the feeling of having made a *faux pas*. Such reticences one has associated with bygone Poland, Austria, or Russia under

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

an Imperial Secret Service, savoured with a *soupçon* of William le Queux.

On the following evening things did warm up. A middle-aged land-agent expressed the opinion that in his part of the country a farmer's land which in pre-war times had been worth £25 was now worth £50, and that the real ambition of the farmers was not Ireland a Republic, but an Ireland in which a man could till his own soil and hand it down in fee simple to his children.

A young medical student declared that the root of the Irish question lay in the influence of the priests and the anti-English, or rather pro-Irish, system of education in primary and secondary schools. He went on to give instances that had come to his own knowledge, using a phrase which has lingered in the memory: "Ireland suffers from too much religion and too little Christianity."

Different was the tone of an elderly land-owner, descendant of Grattan, who had fought the Constitutional fight for upwards of a generation and whose clenched fist was raised at

## POLITICS IN DUBLIN

the Forces of the Crown. He started on moderate lines, even telling a good-humoured anecdote about Mr. Lloyd George.

“It was in a North Wales constituency some years ago. We met in a railway-carriage and got on to Ireland. The fellow irritated me so much by his ignorance that at last I began giving him a bit of my mind, ending up with the words, ‘Well, Lloyd George, I’m afraid we shall have to settle this with fists.’ Instead of getting angry, however, he laughed and asked me to luncheon. Not such a bad chap after all!”

A rare character, this Nationalist fire-eater, with his weather-beaten face, sunken eyes and picturesque untidiness. He had lived hard and ridden hard (and talked hard) all his life, but the unexpected thing was that he had read hard, too—was an equal advocate of Machiavelli and Mr. Balfour, and had strong though possibly over-weighted intellectual powers. Such types one still finds among the older Irish landed gentry. . . . And he had his own peculiar solution of the Irish question.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

“Irishmen simply want Ireland to remain outside British party politics. Give us an Irish Government, led by an Irish Prime Minister, subject to the prerogative of the King of England—a Republic, if you like, within the British Empire. Control of foreign affairs we would leave with you; your Navy could use our ports, as now. We grudge nothing that you may think vital to the safety of the Empire—not even loyalty. But—leave us to look after our own affairs!”

An allusion to the Government of Ireland Act met with a contemptuous laugh.

“Why, it would be worse for us than the present *régime*! Under the Act, the Viceroy can veto any legislation passed by an Irish Parliament. That would practically mean government by committee. Who wants to be run by a handful of effete Englishmen?”

He was strong on that. “Effete Englishmen” was a favourite expression, and he appeared rather aggressively anxious to emphasise national and racial distinctions. There was a scheme for supplying England with skilled

## POLITICS IN DUBLIN

Irish labour—with agricultural workers and woodmen, some of them trained on his own estate. . . . With it all he was an Imperialist. That was puzzling. It was puzzling, too, to discover that he had commanded an Irish battalion of the British Army during the war—exulted in the fact.

There were, nevertheless, recurring moments when the room rang with the veteran's denunciations of the methods of the Crown, when he shook his fist and, trembling from head to foot, glared round at his friends.

“They rush about our country roads in their lorries, firing their rifles, and frightening our wives and daughters, murdering. But I tell you, if so much as a hair of the head of one of my family or any of my dependants is touched—”

Shaking with rage, he went on to tell of how his wife and daughter had been driving their motor-car along a country road in Galway when a lorryful of Black and Tans had come along, had sworn at them, had forced them almost into the ditch. He ended thus:

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

“Remember, it’s a vendetta! It’s blood for blood and life for life. I say that if any of mine or any near to me are so much as touched by these ruffians, I’ll have the life not of a policeman, but of one of our ‘great men’ who ‘rule’ at Dublin Castle. And they know it—I’ve told them so to their faces! I tell you, the Irish people will not forget this thing for generations—unto the third and fourth generation. . . . We were prospering, the country was settling down, and then—this gang of assassins. And the work of my lifetime undone.”

During this harangue the other members of the little circle became uneasy. The practical land-agent repeatedly murmured his dissent, and next morning declared that he flatly disagreed with these opinions, which were not representative of the majority of the Irish people, adding:

“You mustn’t pay too much attention to him. He’s like that—he doesn’t mean half he says.”

My own impression, on the whole, differed. The deep-set eyes, the dull light that smouldered in them, the rugged face and powerful

## POLITICS IN DUBLIN

jaw with their suggestion of fanaticism, expressed a resentment that rankled deep and a determination that would brook no wrong. On the whole, this grim old Nationalist stood for the kind of man who for better or worse has suffered, fought, and in some cases died for Ireland during later periods of her history.

## CHAPTER III

### LIFE IN CORK

**T**HE mail train to Cork, which had been due to leave Dublin at 7.30 a. m., did not in fact depart till 8.15 on the morning of April 23rd.

Arriving at Kingsbridge after a chilly drive through Dublin's awakening streets, I found several Crown lorries standing in the station yard and a score of "men in green" pacing up and down the platform. A number of other prospective passengers had collected by the original hour of departure, including several horsy-looking persons and one merry party of young people on their way to Clonmel races.

When the train at last came in half-full of passengers from the Kingstown boat, I made for the breakfast car. Here, as table companion, was a person of such a type as one meets only in Ireland. He was beefy, red-faced, and



## LIFE IN CORK

red-haired; he had a colossal appetite. He was the only Irishman I met who took no interest in politics, but disclosed instead an interest in horses and horse-racing transcending anything else. We discussed three-year-olds and Cup horses of the year with a gusto which was explained when he informed me that before assuming the garb of the Church of Ireland, he had been a cattle and horse dealer and had made many a voyage in Glasgow and Liverpool cattle-boats. Even now he trained and raced his own horses. Incidentally he "swore." . . .

In the middle of breakfast four big Black and Tans with revolvers strapped to their thighs tramped in, sat down at the next table, and leant their rifles against the backs of their chairs.

A prosperous-looking country fled by. The greenness of everything, the grazing cattle, the smug appearance of the white cottages and farmsteads against the sunlit landscape, protested against the presence of a spectre that stalked through the counties of the South.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

At the Curragh a number of racing-men got in; at Maryborough a number of railwaymen. These descended at Thurles, with affable "good mornings."

By midday we were at Cork. . . .

Earlier visitors to the hotel at which I stayed had spoken of it as a favourite resort of Black and Tans and Government "agents," and had described more than one lively "scene" of which they had been witnesses. I was surprised, therefore, to find a large dining-room occupied by three persons only—two Dublin surgeons and an individual whom I shall call X.

Mr. X. was a tall man of fine physique, dressed in a grey tweed suit, and he always wore a black tie with a rather flash-looking pearl pin. On the street he wore a "billycock"; he never carried stick, umbrella, or gloves. He had a hard, bony face, a short bristly moustache, and a devil-may-care expression which boded ill for anyone who should cross him. Altogether a tough-looking customer.

He appeared to have plenty of money too

## LIFE IN CORK

and nothing to do all day but chaff the waiters, drink whiskies-and-sodas and stand at the door of the hotel with his hands in his pockets. Once or twice I met him in the street, standing outside some tea-shop or lounging along the pavement treating the world to a defiant sneer. If by chance one fell into conversation with the hall-porter of the hotel or any of its residents, this individual appeared from nowhere; you would suddenly find him lighting a cigar at your elbow or looking out of the window within hearing distance, or he would frankly seat himself opposite and order a drink.

We had a conversation about nothing. We regarded one another with hostility. I never discovered anything about X. except that he had served in the South African War and had held a commission during the European War. To the end of my journey—and we were often to meet—X. remained a mystery.

That Cork was full of spies and that a stray Englishman bent upon an apparently aimless mission was bound to be taken for one, soon

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

became evident. It was a novel sensation. On the second morning after my arrival, while writing letters in the hotel smoking-room, which abutted upon the busy street, a dark, lean individual wearing a brown suit attracted my attention. He passed and repassed on the opposite pavement, each time glancing at the window before which I sat. I drew the lace curtains, through the interstices of which I could see my friend without being seen. He stopped nearly opposite, looked casually up and down the street, and then keenly at my window.

Later on I had occasion to walk up to Victoria Barracks. Half-way along Patrick Street I caught sight of the hungry-looking creature on the opposite side of the road. I let him get slightly ahead and before reaching the bridge swerved sharp down a side-street and so back to the hotel.

When, later I did visit the Barracks, it dawned upon me that the groups of young men loafing outside public-houses in the neighbourhood were not so idle as they looked. Seeing two respectable-looking gentlemen conversing

## LIFE IN CORK

at a street corner, I inquired the best way to my destination. One of them gave me a direction in purest Cockney, the other so confidential a wink that I realised we all belonged in each other's opinion to the freemasonry of X.

Notwithstanding this subterranean activity and despite the fact that, on the following morning, all the postmen were held up on their rounds and robbed of their mails, Cork city seemed quiet after Dublin.

Even Patrick Street did not startle. There it was hot and busy in the sunshine, and you hardly noticed at first the area of stark ruins in the very centre of it. Then you thought of —Amiens.

And you realised why the ruins were—in your eyes—inconspicuous; because they had grown normal and customary in seven years, because ruins were characteristic of the Ireland of 1921.

There were to be seen at all hours, it is true, an extraordinary number of young and middle-aged, able-bodied men standing about the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

streets; and that seemed typical of Cork, as of most other Irish towns. It was due, in part, to the slackness of the port and of business generally, but mainly to the closing down of Ford's Works which had been established to supply agricultural tractors for the whole of Ireland and had hitherto employed between 700 and 800 men.

Soldiers thronged the streets but few Irregulars, and comparatively few of those clattering armed lorries and cars which had confronted you half a dozen times an hour in Dublin. . . . "K" Division had gone "up country."

And to a certain extent this appearance of peaceableness was illusory. One of the first men I met in Cork was the manager of a big business there who on the previous Friday evening had been the victim of an unpleasant experience. It was pay-day. Surrounded by notes and cash, he sat in his office about 5.30 when the door was flung open and four rough-looking men entered, levelling revolvers at his head. One of the four was masked, the others

## LIFE IN CORK

wore false moustaches. The leader than ordered the manager to conduct him to the safe where the bulk of pay was kept. The latter did so with, as he described it, "one of the swine backing away from me holding a revolver in a shaking hand and another prodding me in the back with a revolver-barrel;" the other members of the gang meanwhile were helping themselves to the loose cash on the office-desk. They eventually made off with £1,200 in cash, and, in the words of the fairy story, "were never heard of again."

Another gentleman I met in Cork was a bank manager. His experience was that having, during a two minutes' absence, left open his strong-room door, "some person or persons unknown" had entered and relieved the bank of £800—"an almost weekly occurrence" he called it.

Most Cork business firms now pay wages by cheque. . . .

These, of course, were ordinary crimes. There were undoubtedly at this time increasing signs of the professional criminal element tak-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

ing advantage of the unsettled conditions in the South, and against them the police seemed practically powerless: there were also the intricate machinations of Sinn Fein. And there were still the Black and Tans. The unfortunate populace fell between two stools, if not three, as the following episode shows.

The wife of a big man of business in Cork was informed by her servants that her housemaid must go. She had been guilty of the offence of talking to Black and Tans. Sinn Fein vengeance, they pointed out, was inevitable. "But," the lady of the house suggested, "what about the Black and Tans—won't they have a word or two to say if I turn her out?" And the other servants agreed that they would. Anyway, the housemaid remained, and the household has not since been disturbed.

All of which events did not prevent Miss Blank from giving a dance. For even while these sinister details were being related, strains of ragtime floated down the stairs, and there could be heard overhead the patter of Miss



## LIFE IN CORK

Blank's guests and there could even be perceived Miss Blank's lady and gentlemen friends sitting out on sofas and in corners.

And you heard snatches of conversation like this:

"Well, Mr. Murphy, we haven't seen much of you lately?"

"No, Miss O'Hara, I've given up social life. I've taken to golf."

"Come and look us up one day——" etc.

Nor did the desperate events aforementioned prevent the big new tea-shop on Patrick Street from being filled with the rank and fashion of Cork of a Saturday afternoon. Here everybody seemed to know everybody and here I was introduced to two ladies, mother and sister of a prosperous merchant, who a few days before had had a bad fright. With the son of the former they had been rambling about the cliff of an old quarry on the outskirts of the city and had reached the highest part of it when an armed load of Black and Tans appeared beneath and shouted to them to come down and identify themselves. They proceeded to de-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

scend as best they could but were told they were not moving fast enough and found half a dozen rifles levelled at them. It was not a laughing matter then!

Isolated, burnt-out houses confronted you on many Cork streets, and you were told that they had once been Sinn Fein clubs. But when, in the evening, you saw the aged shawled women sitting gossiping in rows by the Mall waterside with the sunshine warming the grey stone bridge and the old houses beyond fringed with new green of flowering chestnuts, it was difficult to believe that the city had passed through such stressful times. You entered the Town Club nearby and found men dining and drinking and playing cards together in civilised comfort without reference to politics or religion. A matter of the first importance is a golf handicap that is to be played off on the following day; a matter for some resentment is the fact that an officer has taken to playing his round with an armed escort, thereby challenging Sinn Fein retribution upon the greens!

## LIFE IN CORK

One was repeatedly assured in Cork that militant Sinn Fein was a Young Man's Movement exclusively — that the parents disapproved, indeed begged their sons not to participate in political activity. During a long wait at the Barrack gate one afternoon, I found a middle-aged, respectable-looking woman who carried a small basket and a brown-paper parcel pleading for an interview with a son who was awaiting his trial. The sentry at the gate was uncouth but not unkind.

"Too late to-day, missis. You can see him to-morrow between 11 and 12, or 2 and 3."

"What can I bring him, please—cigarettes—cake—tea?"

"Oh! anything you like!"

She went away presently, muttering through tears, "Maybe he'll be released."

It was difficult to believe that *that* woman counselled ambush, treachery, murder; but in Ireland they say, "You never know."

And there were incidents of another sort. There was a calm spring evening when I made

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

my way out to Blackrock and walked back along the river-road. Near the city at an open ground where children play, high commotion prevailed. Mothers, fathers, children, and passers-by were all jabbering together and pointing in the direction of the town. Somebody's child, it appeared, had been kidnapped by a mysterious individual in a motor-car.

"No Irishman did that," caught my ear as I passed; "it's some bastard of an Englishman."

One later evening I came to an unlovely burnt-out villa on the outskirts, on the front of which was scrawled "Up, Dublin!" between two rudely-painted shamrocks. Beneath was a sort of coat-of-arms consisting of two greyhounds, heads above a scroll upon which was inscribed the word "Libertas." Beneath this, again, ran the inscription, "Remember 1916! Irishmen, join the I.R.A."

But the best commentary on daily life in Cork was a local newspaper placard at a street corner :

THE WEEK'S WARFARE

---

MURDER BY INSANE PROFESSOR

---

CAUGHT AT DRILL

---

FIVE CIVILIANS KILLED

---

GARDENING AND POULTRY NOTES

---

TALKS ON HEALTH

---

ALL THE USUAL FEATURES

## CHAPTER IV

### TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

**A**N introduction from Dublin brought me into touch with an obliging intermediary in the city of Cork through whom I was enabled to approach two of the leading Republicans in the South.

In England it had seemed a curious feature of the Irish situation—though one resulting almost inevitably from the rapid evolution of Sinn Fein—that while our “governing classes” had been stirred to the depths by the war in Ireland, the leaders of that war on the opposing side were all but unknown even by name. In Dublin, Mr. de Valera and Messieurs Michael Collins and Richard Mulcahy had proved elusive. And to me, as to most Englishmen, they represented, in the one case a nebulous and visionary being, a leader of Irish idealism though not necessarily of militant

## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

Republicanism, in the other something sinister and ominous, something vaguely, indefinitely hostile.

It seemed not less important to get an idea of the character and attitude of the Sinn Fein leaders, because at this date, April 23rd, Lord Derby, disguised as "Mr. Edwards," was known to have just left Dublin: and he the last, but not the least of a long succession of peace-makers whose names included Lord Haldane (early in April) and (in March) two prominent young Unionist Members of Parliament.

It thus came about that, accompanied by a friend, I entered the City Hall. Here stood a long queue of respectable-looking people, including young girls and middle-aged men and women, waiting, I was informed, to receive their dole (£1 to £2 a week) from the fund subscribed by the United States of America and the City of Cork for sufferers in the "war." They looked the sort of people who, in peaceable times, would have earned an income of £1 to £2 a day.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

We passed through the Assize Court with its judges' bench, its old-fashioned prisoners' dock, and the insignia of British justice—a rather superfluous emblem amid those dusty surroundings—embroidered above the judge's chair. We entered a rather bare little room where, seated at a table facing the door, was a slight, keen-looking, clean-shaven man darkly clothed and about 35 years of age. Barry M. Egan reminds one of certain symbolists of the French Revolution. Here were the pallid, almost ill-looking features, the calm formal manner, the thin, precise lips of—a doctrinaire? When this man spoke, it was coldly and deliberately. He was unsparing; he was polite.

Such was the Deputy-Lord Mayor of Cork, whose big jewellery business was burned down in December 1920. Mr. Egan spoke with a frankness for which I felt truly and deeply obliged, giving in reasoned and passionless terms the Republican standpoint.

He was crisp. And if message there was to people on this side of the Irish Sea, it was this:



## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

"Get out!"

"Get out!" he added sharply. "We don't object to you personally but—leave us in peace! We don't want to be a pawn in your politics. We are ready for war or peace, and the decision lies with you."

I put to him the question:

"Do you think it possible that some liberal measure of self-government within the Empire—Dominion Home Rule, for instance—would satisfy the aspirations of your people?"

"That, and all kindred questions," he answered, "are matters for the consideration of President de Valera and the elected representatives of the Irish people—Dail Eireann. It is not for me to express an opinion. But this much I can say. Whatever is offered, whatever settlement is proposed by your Government, must be backed by something more tangible than promises. Of promises we've had enough and more than enough in Ireland. Now we want—at least—pledges."

"What would you suggest as a substantial pledge?"

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

“Clear out your armed forces, put your cards on the table. That’s business.”

“I hear unofficial negotiations are going on in Dublin at this moment. What is your opinion of their prospect?”

“This is a matter for the Irish people. It is a question for ‘we ourselves.’ English politicians had much better keep out of it. I believe Lord Derby is an honest man and a gentleman; no doubt he means well. But anything that is done has got to be done ‘over the counter.’ We want no secret negotiations. President de Valera has made that clear.”

“You do not object to us as a nation, then, but to the Forces and methods of the Crown?”

“As a nation you are responsible for our sufferings during three hundred years. You don’t understand us, and you don’t attempt to and I don’t believe you want to. The English people could stop this reign of terror to-morrow if they had a mind to. But how many Englishmen have ever read a page of Irish history? The Government of Ireland has always been in the hands of the ‘governing’ classes in Eng-

## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

land; and what have they ever done for us? You accuse Germany of tearing up a treaty as though it were a scrap of paper. From 1782 to 1798 we had a treaty with England. She tore it up in 1800."

"The Land Purchase Act of 1903——!" I began.

"Was that Home Rule? Was that the fulfilment of your promises? The fact remains, my friend, that a population of eight and a half millions has sunk to four millions, that year after year the very life-blood of this country, its finest young men and young women, has flowed out of it. There is room and there is work in this country for twelve millions of people. A market three times as great as at present is waiting to be developed, three or four times the amount of goods might be manufactured. And—always remember—you are our natural market: your prosperity and ours depend one upon the other."

"In case of war," he added, "why should we side against you? Why should we oppose our own best interests?"

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Of violence (and its reactions) Mr. Egan said:

“Murders and crime we all execrate. We don’t want war; it’s imposed on us. We’d much sooner have our men tilling the fields. But, I ask again, who is responsible for these things, who is responsible for the present reign of terror?”

I reminded the Deputy-Lord Mayor of the Prime Minister’s statement in his Reply to the Bishop of Chelmsford (April 19th, 1921):

Why was the Auxiliary Division constituted? Authority for the formation of the Auxiliary Division, which is composed entirely of ex-officers of the Navy, Army, and Air Force, was given on the 10th of July, 1920, after fifty-six policemen, four soldiers, and seventeen civilians had been brutally assassinated, and it did not come into really effective operation until over a hundred policemen had been murdered in cold blood.

Mr. Egan simply handed me a typewritten document giving Sinn Fein’s version of the events which led up to the first shootings, with the remark:

“You’d better not let the Black and Tans

## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

catch you with this." Later, I had reason to remember that caution.

"It is absurd, therefore, to say," the Deputy-Lord Mayor went on when I had read the typescript, "that murders of police caused the policy of which they were the result. It was Gessler began it, not Tell. And if there have been a hundred armed police killed, there have been hundreds of unarmed Irish killed. The plan of this so-called Government is not to suppress murder and restore law and order, but to suppress a people and to restore over them a lawless domination whose infamies they hate and whose spirit they despise."

"But how do you defend the ambushes and the killing of soldiers and policemen in cold blood by men not in uniform?"

"An ambush is a legitimate act of war. Ambushers should be treated, therefore, as prisoners of war. The I.R.A. do not fight in uniform, but the Boers did not fight in uniform in the Boer War, and they were recognised as combatants. Your men go about armed to the teeth. They murder and terrorise indiscrimi-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

nately. What the Germans did in Belgium, you are doing here.”

“And the I.R.A. ‘executions’?”

“I believe that no ‘execution’ is carried out by the I.R.A. except after the most careful investigation, and when the accused has been found guilty of being a murderer or a spy. Remember, we’re at war. Fighting’s only just begun. So far it’s been a mere skirmish. You shot hundreds of Germans in cold blood in France; you shoot Irishmen in cold blood in Cork Barracks; for every one of these the I.R.A. shoots one of yours.”

“Have you come much into contact with the Crown Forces yourself?” I ventured.

Egan smiled. Our mutual friend answered my question.

“The military invaded the City Hall during the Deputy-Lord Mayor’s inaugural speech. You were searched by a subaltern of the Hampshire Regiment, weren’t you, Mr. Egan?”

The Deputy-Lord Mayor nodded.

“But I finished my speech,” he said, again smiling.

## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

His last words were:

“We want one thing—a Republic. And we’ll have it in spite of you.”

That same evening I called upon Alderman Liamon de Roiste (William Roche), M.P., at the offices of the Irish Industrial Development Association. In him I found a typical Republican of the Cork school—one less pronounced perhaps but not less advanced than Barry Egan. He, too, is an “intellectual,” but a humorous glint behind spectacles and an occasional droop at the corners of the mouth seem to betray a less sternness and a warmer humanity.

Liamon de Roiste is a native of Cork and by profession a secondary school-teacher. He was employed on the staff of the Cork School of Commerce before occupying his present position as Secretary of the Irish Industrial Development Association. He is senior Member of Parliament for Cork County, a member of the City Corporation and of Dail Eireann.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

My first question was:

"Do you consider that all Ireland with the exception of Ulster supports the Separatist movement, or only a section of it?"

"As a whole, yes, though of course different forces operate."

"You don't think the people are influenced by the actions of a few dominant personalities?"

"As to that, one might say of all countries that their peoples are led by the most forceful personalities. England and Mr. Lloyd George, for instance."

Liamon de Roiste's eyes twinkled.

"No. The old people are Sinn Feiners because many suffered imprisonment in Land League and Gaelic League days; a certain number of middle-aged people remain Constitutional Nationalists; the young people are afire with patriotism."

"What then brought about the apparently abrupt change from Constitutional Nationalism to Sinn Fein?"

"Speaking chronologically, I think the for-



## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

mation of the Ulster Volunteers in 1914 and the counter-formation of the National Volunteers gave the first impetus. Then the failure to operate Mr. Asquith's Home Rule Act after it had received the Royal Assent. (By that time, you see, we were getting a bit fed up with English promises.) Hostility to England undoubtedly grew under Maxwell's unceasing prosecutions for sedition, suppressions of newspapers, and perpetual searches and imprisonments in 1914, 1915, and 1916. The Easter Rebellion in spite of its failure drew all Irishmen together, and the executions that followed made an enduring impression. All the while we were told we were fighting for the principle of Self-Determination and the Rights of Small Nations. Then came the Peace Conference, 'Wilsonism,' and the League of Nations. These set people thinking and gave a constructive impetus to the movement. Since 1916, you must understand, the state of affairs has become steadily worse. The real change of feeling in this city began with the murder of Lord Mayor MacCurtain. The Govern-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

ment's militant policy has had exactly the reverse effect of that intended."

"But how do you reconcile unprecedented prosperity—which I suppose you'll admit—with armed insurrection?"

"People fight best on a full stomach, you know. Ireland, of course, is an agricultural country, and tillage certainly was stimulated by the war—always is. Industrially, we've probably gone back, if anything."

"In your opinion, has Bolshevism or the Third International anything in common with Sinn Fein?"

"Nonsense—absolutely."

"And to-day would you say the Irish people are definitely anti-English or only anti-Government?"

"We feel no hostility to the English people or to the Army; only to the Irregular Forces of the Crown and other instruments of your Government."

"'Black Sunday' in Dublin made a terrible impression in England."

"One cannot condone murder. But are you

## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

by chance aware that a man was shot here the other day for being *in possession of* a revolver?"

"What do you consider the shortest way to peace?"

"A Republic."

"Would the Irish people accept anything less?"

"The tendency of all modern States, in my belief, is to pull away from the centre rather than obey a centripetal force. Dominion Home Rule has been talked about, but I would prefer not to dogmatise about it while the matter is under consideration by the parties concerned."

"You can define what *you* mean by Dominion Home Rule, though?"

"Well, it must be the real thing as Canada and Australia have it. There must be no English garrison or control of our ports; foreign affairs must be a matter of joint consultation. A self-governing Dominion must have fiscal autonomy, of course."

"And Ulster?"

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

"She must come into the national Parliament on the same terms as the other provinces with perhaps some additional representation."

"Would that meet her views?"

Mr. de Roiste hesitated, stroked his chin, and then said:

"A Provincial Federation on Swiss lines might be worth considering." He paused, then added, "Ireland, you know, is not suited to a strongly bureaucratic Government."

I put a curious but (to me) interesting question:

"It might strike a casual student of Irish history that the genius of your race is not truly Republican, or even Democratic. What do you think?"

Liamon de Roiste smiled.

"Ah—that's looking a long way ahead. But it may be as you say. . . ."

My last inquiry was:

"Have you hopes of an early peace, and would peace bring friendship with it?"

"Ireland could never be more hostile than she is now. Given peace, she has no reason

## TALKS WITH SINN FEIN

to be hostile. All our economic interest, all our future, in fact, are bound up with yours. Your Navy controls the seas. During the war Holland could at any time have been occupied by Germany, couldn't she? Can a great country like yours have anything to fear from a little one living within its shadow?"

I casually gathered that Mr. Augustine Birrell represented Sinn Fein's idea of a good Chief Secretary—or rather, "the best of a bad lot."

There were one or two other leading Sinn Feiners in Cork City at this time with whom I should have been glad to make acquaintance but who were what was technically known as "on the run." The majority of them subsequently took up their residence at a bleak spot called Ballykinlar on the coast of Down. Included among them was a certain Walsh, M.P., member of Dail Eireann for Cork City, who for some time held a position under the Board of Agriculture. But it was Liamon de Roiste who, after being "on the run" for several

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

months, claimed arrears of salary due from the Technical Board under which he had been employed on account of absence from his duties "for reasons beyond his control."

The claim failed!

## CHAPTER V

### TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

**W**HATEVER notions or preconceptions a man brought with him to Cork, the site of the burnings demanded a first-hand explanation. Nor did he usually have long to wait for one.

"I thought there was something up that evening," an early acquaintance volunteered. "My wife and I were walking along Patrick Street about nine o'clock when they came charging up and down, lorry-loads of them, firing their guns, shouting, and doing everything they could to frighten the people off the streets. It's a crowded time here, nine o'clock, and I heard one or two shout, 'Get along home.' So I said to my wife, 'Come along! We'd best get home.' In the night she woke me up. 'Look,' she said, and it was like daylight

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

through the blind. I looked out and saw the town was on fire."

Another citizen, a municipal official, said:

"I shall never forget that night. I was at it from half-past ten till daybreak, walking about the streets, carrying buckets of water, and trying to get the soldiers and police to lend a hand. . . . Did I see them at it? Well, I didn't because they cleared everybody off the streets before curfew. But when the fires had fairly got a hold and I was sent for, the place was alive with them—some drunk or at any rate behaving like maniacs."

"Lots of people saw them at it from their bedroom windows," was the account of a third resident. "Why, there's not the shadow of a doubt about who did it. You might as well say the man who stops the traffic in Piccadilly Circus is not a policeman!"

"Sir Hamar Greenwood said in the House of Commons——"

Laughter greeted that name. It was in the Cork Club. One felt like a man who, alone in



## TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

a company of experts, has made a foolish remark.

“Sir Hamar Greenwood——!!”

“Talk about Welshmen . . .!!”

More laughter. And it is of no use denying some rude things were said.

“He’s the chap who talked about ‘the crowds in the streets at 2.30 a.m.,’ when curfew was at 10 p.m.!”

“And the fire ‘spreading’ from Grant’s in Patrick Street to the Carnegie Library, eh?”

“Well, the place seems quiet enough now, anyway.”

“Yes—till it wakes up—or till to-night—or till to-morrow morning,” said someone facetiously.

“‘K’ Division were in Cork at the time,” remarked the Town Clerk, as if that explained everything. “After the burnings, I went up to see General Higginson at Victoria Barracks. I wanted a guarantee that the outrages would not be repeated. He said: ‘Anyone, police or civilian, who’s found looting will be shot.’ Next day ‘K’ Division left the town.”

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

What the Chief Secretary said in the House of Commons on December 14, 1920, was:

At 9.30 p.m. the police in Cork City received a message stating that a fire had broken out in the large premises of Messrs. Alexander Grant & Co., in Patrick Street, and shortly afterwards other fires were notified as having occurred on the premises of Messrs. Cash & Co. of the Munster Arcade. . . . Strenuous efforts were made by the fire brigade to extinguish the flames. but despite their efforts the fire spread to a number of other buildings, including the City Hall, Carnegie Library, and fifteen other large business premises.

I repaired to the starting-point. A mushroom building had sprung up where the old Grant's had been. Looking at my watch, I walked at a leisurely pace along Patrick Street, turned to the right down Pembroke Street, to the left along the Mall, crossed the river by the bridge, and found myself facing the blackened red-brick of the Carnegie Library with the Town Hall beyond. The time taken was four-and-a-half minutes. Buildings and the river separate the two points; one notices no signs of burning except at the corner of Cook Street nearly midway between.

\* \* \* \*

## TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

"Everybody's taken a step to the left. Your old Nationalists have joined pacifist Sinn Fein; pacifist Sinn Fein has become active Republican; we Unionists take our stand on the old Nationalism. Although," he added, "Dillonism is dead."

He was an old-fashioned Unionist who had lived a lifetime in Cork. He was weary, he declared, and he was sick of it all—the eternal politics, the fighting, the uncertainty of everything.

"Cork used to be a good enough place to live in. We prospered under the Union—till 1916. We had four packs of hounds within accessible distance, we had boating and sailing, and—well, they reckoned it one of the best military stations in Ireland. Now I daren't motor seven miles to the inland golf course."

"And what is there to look forward to?" he went on. "Nobody wants the Partition Act—nobody in the South cares a brass button for it. Good or bad, it's no use giving a man something he doesn't want. . . . And the finance of the thing is rotten. Look here! An already

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

over-taxed country is to pay eighteen millions annually to the Crown Exchequer——”

“——for three years,” I interjected.

“——for services it doesn't want. The dual legislature is enough in itself to ruin this unfortunate country. Then they've washed out the Excess Profits Duty (without a thought for their commitments on the basis of it) and Austen Chamberlain's existing basis of revenue and expenditure, namely, the seven-and-a-half millions 'surplus' is converted into a deficit of two-and-a-half millions. And that's not all. The expenditure of the Irish Government is the last charge on Irish Revenue under the Act. The eighteen millions tribute takes priority. The cost of the Reserved Services takes priority. The Police are a Reserved Service. In 1919-20, the 'police vote' was three-and-three-quarter millions. This year they say the force will cost over seven millions. And so on. Well—it'll hit the North harder in proportion than it will us. If the Act was going to bring peace one would grin and bear it. But it's not. . . .”

One had been prepared for this “peace” note

## TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

in Dublin. The bewilderment and vexation of men whose business was dwindling and whose lives were turned upside down did not surprise—or the yearning to keep outside politics altogether. What surprised—one at any rate who had marched with the Covenanters in 1913 and seen the oath taken under the Ulster leader's own eyes—what surprised was the divorce from the North, a coldness, a sense of separation, segregation, divergent interests even.

The first remarks on the boycott that reached my ears came from a director of the Munster and Leinster Bank. He pointed out that no Belfast goods were to be bought in the shops, that no more than could be helped were permitted to cross the Ulster border, and that no Belfast traveller did any business in Cork.

“Serve 'em right, too,” was the gist of this gentleman's remarks. “They only think of themselves. They're a lot of narrow-minded bigots. Down here, at any rate, religion makes no difference between man and man or in social or commercial life. The Government have given us a Roman Catholic Lord Lieu-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

tenant under the impression, I suppose, that he will be welcomed on religious grounds. It only shows how little they know of the South. I assure you that side of it leaves us here absolutely cold. The only thing the country wants is peace—peace under a liberalised form of self-government, but peace first and a chance of settling down and making money and enjoying the fruits of these last prosperous years. That's worth more to us than any political system."

This cry greeted one wherever prosperous and hard-working citizens met. An unenviable position was that of a Cork newspaper-man whose respected faculty in the town lay between the contentions of all parties. His defence of the Government of Ireland Act—and he seemed to be its only defender—was based on the belief that if the Irish people as a whole desired a Republic or a Dominion, they desired one thing more—a settlement. He regarded the Act, moreover, as a good one in itself, not indeed as an instrument capable of settling the Irish Question, but as a transition

## TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

measure which by bringing the parties together and, as a pledge—that pledge so often demanded of the Government by the irreconcilables—contained the germ and the promise of better things.

These views, too moderate perhaps, too hopeful to prevail in the country as a whole—and yet perhaps shared by a larger proportion of far-sighted Irishmen than dare own to the fact—these views may be crystallised as follows:

“Eight to ten per cent. of the population favours violence, and these almost exclusively the younger generation.”

Another local man here intervened, saying that he put the proportion higher—nearer twenty per cent.

“In the priesthood, for instance,” the first speaker continued, “nearly all the older men are Constitutional Nationalists, only a proportion of the younger ones are complacent towards Sinn Fein. It is the same with the people. The bulk of the country longs for peace under a decent measure of Home Rule.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

A constitution which would leave naval and military control and foreign affairs as at present, whilst giving Ireland the right to levy her own taxes, customs, and excise, would meet the views of all parties, providing a free vote could be obtained. As to the amount of any subsidy to be paid by Ireland for Imperial services, this ought to be estimated by an independent firm of assessors. The *sine qua non* of any permanent settlement is that through the Council of Ireland or by some other means, South and North shall eventually unite in a single legislature."

If this was the belief of an individual, it was shared by a dozen others—bankers, wine-merchants, municipal officials, journalists: even by one or two shopkeepers and workmen who cling to the old Nationalism.

And there were such. The most representative of them, a genial hotel *concierge* with a shrewd wit and intelligence, is known to wide circles in England and Ireland as "Florrie." Florrie is a Nationalist of the Redmondite school, and a loyal liege of the Empire. Rather



## TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

past fifty, he declares that he has been a politician since he was a boy. We spoke one morning of Chief Secretaries.

"The only man who can save Ireland," said he, "is Lord MacDonnell. Why have they never made him Chief Secretary? He understood Ireland better than any man before or since his time—a splendid fellow. Lord Talbot [*sic*] may be all right, but we don't know him and he doesn't know us. Why don't they give us an Irish Lord Lieutenant—Lord Kenmare, for instance? We all know him. If he's outside politics, so much the better. Then Granard—he's an Irishman: and Lord Dunraven—a great man. Plenty of good men, but they send us an Englishman we know nothing of. If you ask about those we've had, Aberdeen was the best of them——"

"He wasn't very popular in Dublin," interrupted somebody. "They say in Dublin he wasn't too fond of spending."

"Never mind! Aberdeen was all right. And so was Lady Aberdeen. People don't like seeing a lot of money spent in these times. The

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Aberdeens went about the country, and got to know the people. Everybody knew them. That's the great thing in Ireland."

"Yes, Balfour was all right," said Florrie in reply to a question. "He was a just man. His mistake was the narrow-gauge railways. Wyndham?—yes. His Land Purchase Act was good, but I've always heard Lord Dunraven and Lord MacDonnell had more to do with that than Wyndham had. Bryce was the best of the lot, though—the best Chief Secretary Ireland's ever had."

The tangled skeins, the perplexities of Cork were finally drawn together by an elderly Conservative, who seemed to typify that separate entity in Ireland which has so definitely emerged since Lord Carson set his seal to the Partition Act—the Southern Unionist. Here was a man English rather than Scotch; Irish rather than Unionist: a man whose heart swelled with pride as he told you that his son had fought in the British Army during the war, whose business connections with England

## TALKS WITH SOUTHERN UNIONISTS

were frequent and firm: withal a man who loves Ireland and recognises his identity with her future, whatever it may be. He said:

“What’s wanted is for the leaders to get together and settle this thing. They could do it in a couple of hours if they meant business. Only don’t let English politicians interfere—they don’t understand us. Mr. Lloyd George ought to come out in the House of Commons and say what he is prepared to give us. In the long run, this is a question of each side giving something away and Ulster getting the safeguards she wants in a Dublin Parliament. Things can’t go on as they are. We are nobody’s enemy and nobody’s friend. And both sides have made mistakes. The Black Sunday shootings in Dublin were a terrible mistake. People here groaned when they heard of them. On Sunday week, six soldiers were shot in different parts of this city in reprisal for the executions at the barracks. Then the Black and Tans——”

He stopped, but I pressed him.

“The fact is, ‘K’ Division—not the military

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

—were intolerable. At the same time, everybody admits the discipline has improved since they left the town. I personally had only one experience of that lot. I was walking home one night before curfew when a patrol stopped me, and although they could see I was an elderly man and in fact knew me for a loyalist, a young cub of nineteen searched me, swore at me, and knocked my hat off. It's incidents like those that turn moderate people into extremists as much as, or nearly as much as, material losses do."

## CHAPTER VI

### LIFE IN MALLOW

**I**T seemed very curious that among those who knew local conditions best and had lived through recent years in Cork, a complete difference of opinion prevailed as to the practicability of walking the twenty miles between Cork and Mallow. Some were willing to bet that the traveller would not cover half the distance without getting into trouble; others that he would certainly be held up, but, if capable of giving a satisfactory account of himself, would be allowed to proceed; others, again, asserted that he would not be seriously interfered with unless he interfered with anyone else.

There was another question to be considered. Was it advisable to carry a pass or passes? To this question, again, some said "Yes" and some said "No," while a third party

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

advised carrying the one pass but not the other. For that which had been unobtainable in Dublin, help and patience had secured in Cork. In addition to an informal passport from a Republican quarter, and that furnished by Dublin Castle, I held an envelopeful of English references. Finally I decided to carry both passes.

And in the upshot, this first stage on the road to Belfast proved to be a pleasant walk. . . .

The morning of April 25th broke chill and cloudy. The road to Mallow follows for some distance a gradually rising valley. Donkey-carts loaded with peat and vegetables making their way towards the city, urged forward by ragged boys, occasionally passed. Mile out a lorry-load of soldiers, shouting and singing, rushed by at breakneck speed. Another passed between Ballynamona and Mallow, and in each case I prepared for the worst, but the lorries raced on. Otherwise the road was strangely and significantly empty.

Once two men and a youth digging or planting potatoes in a field, ran down to the wall and

## LIFE IN MALLOW

looked after me when I had passed, presumably because I was a stranger. Again, an uncouth-looking man appeared half a mile away over the rim of the hill and made obliquely for the road, running. While we steadily approached one another I apprehended the "trouble," which I had been warned to expect, but he doubled crazily on across the highway and disappeared.

After a while the sun came out and set the gorse aflame. Patches of barley and potatoes alternated with gorse and heather. Larks sang. The smiling springtime landscape, brown and yellow and dull green, would have infected one with its own gaiety had one been less conscious of the grim visage behind.

There was a complete dearth of traffic. Every two or three miles occurred loose places in the road's surface, as though it had been dug up and replaced. A definite reminder of the realities of the countryside came beyond the village of Blackpool. Where a grey stone bridge crosses a stream which sings and ripples down a narrow ravine, a neat trench four

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

feet deep by three broad had been dug across the road.

The greater trouble was a rucksack. And what a perverse thing a rucksack can be! It can cut your shoulder like a razor, cause you to walk lop-sided, and until the two of you become better acquainted, make you feel old before your time. . . .

So to Mallow in the late afternoon, a curious peace lying upon it, a dreaming quiet creeping down from heather-clad mountains. This is a grey town with a long straggling street leading from the market-place to the railway station; it lies in a pastoral country. I paused a long while on the old stone bridge which spans the Blackwater, resting and looking down into turquoise and amethyst depths that reflected a blue sky, reeds, lawn-like grass, the rounded tops of leafing elms, browns and blacks of the lower hills. It was like a little thing of Corot. From some ruins on the further bank came chatter and squawking of jackdaws. An old man leant



## LIFE IN MALLOW

against the stone parapet, smoking his pipe, and spitting reflectively.

"Yon's the ruins of Mallow Castle," he said, "built 600 years ago by the Earl of Desmond. They used to be covered with ivy till the Black and Tans came and stripped it all off."

Then:

"There used to be grouse on the mountain. I don't know whether there are any now. . . ."

A mile from Mallow lies the home of William O'Brien—a white country-house surrounded by a large garden, grass fields, and fine trees. I found the old Independent Nationalist writing in a room flooded with the late afternoon sunshine, filled with the scent of spring flowers.

It's a pleasant thing, isn't it, to see a man thus taking his ease in the aftermath of a stormy life. The fine head, the whitening beard, the restless eyes smouldering behind glasses—these are no less formidable than they were in the days when William O'Brien

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

galvanised the House of Commons into spasmodic attention; the manner and the mannerisms no less ardent.

"I have nothing to say," was the discouraging opening remark. "I have said my say. My friends and myself warned them of what was coming years ago. We could have shewn them the way out through a policy of conference and conciliation. They paid no heed to us. Now they've gone back to it again, but they've got to deal with men who act first and talk afterwards."

That note dominated our discussion.

"You've come to the wrong man, my friend. Nothing I can say will make any difference. Nobody's views count for anything in Ireland to-day except those of a member of the Dail Eireann."

I continued, nevertheless, to press for a more definite expression of opinion.

"While English parties believed me to be an enemy of England they respected me, they treated me fairly; directly I ceased to

## LIFE IN MALLOW

give them trouble, they thought me no longer worth attending to."

Contempt of English politicians, disgust with English evasions, anger and horror at the happenings of recent years—these were the recurring periods in a *motif* of infinite regret.

"The whole story of our relations with England, the whole story of my own political life, has been one of trust and good faith on our part, of perfidy and broken promises on yours. Now you see the result."

William O'Brien's voice shook and his hands trembled when he mentioned the name of Lloyd George. We were back in the 1917 Convention days.

"It was an utter fraud. It was a sham and a fraud, and a way of wasting time until America was brought into the war. Mr. Lloyd George never meant it to succeed. I was in a position to guarantee that Sinn Fein would be represented at a small conference. They refused my offer, they chose instead an unwieldy body of seventy Molly Maguires,

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

every one of whom has since been rejected at the polls."

"Redmond! . . ."

"Redmond?" he echoed, "a figure-head! A respectable Irish gentleman, but a figure-head in the hands of less scrupulous men."

I tried to bring the Independent leader to the stress of more immediate events.

"In anything I say I speak for myself. What I say counts for nothing. The conduct of affairs in this country is in the hands of the elected representatives of the Irish people."

"Can nothing be done, then, to ease or to end the present state of affairs?"

"You've brought it on yourselves, now—leave us alone!"

I thought of Barry Egan's "Get out!" and mentioned the Crown Forces and the state of war in the South.

"The methods of the Crown have embittered all Ireland for generations."

He went on to speak of three local squires, one of them a retired Army officer, who had been assaulted; of incidents at Thurles and

## LIFE IN MALLOW

Fermoy; of alleged wanton shootings at civilians working in allotments and gardens, of wanton damage to property.

I reminded him of the campaign of the Republican Army. He laughed—bitterly.

“That only began after all open attempts to assert the will of the people had been savagely suppressed. In any case, it is a war of country lads armed with shot-guns and spades and revolvers against all the might of England, and yet you are miserably failing to put down the rebellion you have provoked.”

His solitary light in night and storm was this:

“I’ve no doubt—and remember I speak for nobody but myself—I’ve no doubt a peace could be patched up still. But England’s got to make the first offer. And she’s got to back it up with some guarantee that she will keep her word. She’s never yet made a definite offer.”

When we stood on the steps in the failing light, William O’Brien’s face relaxed a little from its expression of severity and scorn.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

“The tragedy of it all is that there never was a quieter or a happier place than Mallow until this business began. The people will not submit to being driven and bullied, but they simply long for peace.”

Next morning I saw the blank space in the middle of Main Street, all stones and rubble and bits of wall where the Town Hall had stood. Up near the Court-house and again at the end of the street were gaps as in a row of teeth where houses seemed to have been razed to the ground. Bare grey walls enclosing a rubbishy space proclaimed where Mallow’s creamery had been. I called on the priest, and was told he was ill in bed and that his curate was out. I then proceeded to the Protestant clergyman’s house a mile away. It stands on a hill.

Two knocks and a long interval of waiting brought a maid-servant.

“What do you want?”

“Can I see Canon——?”

“He’s engaged.”

## LIFE IN MALLOW

“——when he’s disengaged?”

Undisguisedly suspicious, she went to report to her master. Presently the Canon himself appeared.

An unmistakable look came into his face when I asked if he could oblige me with his views upon local conditions?

“My views! Impossible, my dear sir. Why, it would be more than my life’s worth. There’s many a poor lad in these parts been laid under the sod for less than that.”

“Perhaps I haven’t made myself clear? I’m——”

“I don’t think you have.”

The door slammed. And there was an end of it.

At the cross-roads by the railway bridge a man was standing.

“Good morning to ye!”

“Good morning!”

“Well, things are bad in these parts. I wish they’d settle down. . . .”

A total stranger! A native! This was very

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

odd. It was my turn to cut the conversation short, and I did.

At the Court-house, Quarter Sessions were being held. Soldiers and R.I.C. men lounged without; within, the little court was packed. There were two or three military officers and several soldiers and R.I.C. men, and at the back a heterogeneous collection of such ragged and neckerchiefed vagabonds as may only be found in an Irish Court of Justice. The dock was empty. A respectable-looking countryman in Sunday clothes was confronting from the witness-box a Jorrocks-faced judge. A lawyer in wig and gown with a most pugnacious face was cross-examining him in a pungent brogue. It was very stuffy—and very dull. I left them as I had found them, wearily haggling over a plot of grazing land said to have been misdevised in a dead man's will.

A polite caretaker made me welcome to the town reading-room, where I had an appointment with a local resident.

"People are absolutely quiet here if they are left alone," the latter said. And in the



## LIFE IN MALLOW

plain but comfortable room with its armchairs and writing-table and newspapers like any village club-room in England, it was easily possible to believe him.

"Everybody knew each other and we were all the best of friends, as you might have judged for yourself if you had come in here of an evening. We have no religious differences. Politics never worried us much. 'Tis my opinion that people want a change, but they would be content with Dominion Home Rule or any generous measure of self-Government, providing it brought peace. The Government of Ireland Act is no use because it won't bring peace. We don't want an Irish army or navy, and we don't want separation from the Empire."

I questioned him about the alleged Sinn Fein propaganda in the schools.

"I don't know of any, though the Irish language is taught, of course."

"What started the war here?"

"The trouble began on September 28th of last year, when about fifty of the I.R.A. attacked the barracks. Nearly all the soldiers

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

were out horse-watering. The first I knew of anything being wrong was about 9.30. I had just walked down to the office from my house when a soldier in his shirt-sleeves came galloping down the street on horseback. 'Something's wrong,' I said to my clerk, but we agreed the horse had run away with him. Then they all came racing back. . . . Soon after we knew: the sentry had been shot dead, four hundred rifles had been taken, and carried off in motor-cars. You see, they were not local men. They'd come from a distance. Since then we've had no peace."

The notorious affair at the railway station succeeded the killing of a District-Inspector's wife a month later.

Eyes follow one fearfully rather than angrily in Mallow.

That evening I turned down a narrow lane leading off the main street, and sought out the barracks. They were a smallish grey building at the end of the lane beyond some dingy-looking cottages. On the farther side were fields.

## LIFE IN MALLOW

I was surveying these environs at leisure, with a view to reconstructing September's daring coup, when a voice called "Halt."

Looking up, I found a sentry's bayonet levelled at me from a sort of platform which projected from the barrack-wall some twenty feet above the ground.

At the same moment I felt a tap on the shoulder, and turning round stood face to face with a man in civilian clothes.

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh!—just looking round."

"Kindly accompany me to the police barracks."

## CHAPTER VII

### SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

**H**E was a plain-clothes constable. On the way to the police-barracks we had a few words.

“What did you want to see at the barracks?”

“A man was telling me about the attack in September. I thought I’d see the place for myself.”

“Rather a curious thing to do, looking about like that, wasn’t it? Who and what are you, please?”

Before I had time to explain, we arrived at the police-barracks.

In a bare, comfortless room that was evidently used as a mess-room, six or seven Black and Tans were grouped around an aged Sinn Feiner, who was pouring forth a torrent of words in a perfectly incomprehensible vernacular.

The policemen were laughing. They ap-

## SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

peared to be "ragging" the old man. Their attention, however, was immediately transferred to myself.

"I found this man looking round the barracks," was my introduction to the sergeant-in-charge.

I bethought me of the pass and photograph in my pocket, signed, sealed, and delivered by Dublin Castle. I produced it.

"These things can be faked," was the discouraging comment on what I had assumed to be a short-cut to immediate release. And when I gave as my *raison d'être* a desire to study the Irish Question at first-hand, the answer was, "Oh! we've heard all that before."

I then realised that I was regarded with genuine suspicion. My captor had hitherto been polite. He now took his cue from the attitude of the sergeant, which was uncompromisingly hostile. So did the rest of the company. Whether I was suspected of being an emissary of the Republic, Mr. Michael Collins, or President de Valera himself, seemed an open question. . . .

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Meanwhile a couple of Black and Tans went through my pockets, the rest standing curiously around. My notebook, references, newspaper cuttings, purse, etc., were turned out upon the table, the gentlemen in green falling upon them like dogs upon a heap of bones. Each article was examined with the attention due to a live bomb, especial suspicion attaching to a small, ingenious, and peculiarly harmless folding matchbox.

My interrogation was then resumed, and from the tone of it I could judge that my explanations were by no means to be taken at their face value. Was I telling the truth about myself; what had my movements been since arriving in Ireland, and how could I explain my suspicious tactics in the vicinity of the barracks?

At this moment one of the Black and Tans came across to the window where we were standing.

“Look at these!”

The objects referred to were the Sinn Fein

## SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

“pass” and the typewritten document which Barry Egan had handed me at Cork.

The sergeant's face darkened. “What's the meaning of this?”

The District Inspector was sent for.

“These are seditious documents,” was his comment.

I was invited to write my name, the signature being disputed letter by letter and compared with that on the Castle pass.

Meanwhile, matter not altogether complimentary to the Crown Forces had been extracted from my notebook. To balance this, a small, assertive Black and Tan with a Cockney accent found himself able to corroborate certain of the addresses given.

Somebody else, however, had made a dangerous discovery. An article in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* on Revolution! The word *Herald* was enough!

The police inspector led the way upstairs to his office. Here the whole process began afresh. The same questions were put, all the papers once more examined. This time, how-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

ever, an inventory was made of them. The inspector then took down a statement of my movements and intentions. In the middle of it he broke off and went to the telephone. These ominous words came from the adjoining room:

"I've got a man here who says he's come to see the country . . . looks very suspicious."

I began to see visions of days, a week even, spent in Victoria Barracks, Cork.

The entertaining feature of the proceedings was the conduct of my captor, an old R.I.C. man with thirty years' service. When his superior was out of the room he became brotherly, said it couldn't be helped, "he was only doing his duty," etc., and inquired whether I had any cigarettes. Touched by this unexpected solicitude, I rashly displayed a half-full cigarette case. He promptly seized one with a "thank you," but without further formality. When the inspector re-entered the room, however, his demeanour changed. He assumed a constabular attitude, directed a severe retribu-



## SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

tive glance at his prisoner, and seemed bent on proving that the said prisoner was a villain.

The taking of the statement had not been completed when an officer of the South Staffordshire regiment entered the room. I sympathised with his embarrassment; he knew not what to say or how to say it.

“Don’t you know\* better than to wander about in the neighbourhood of barracks?” was his stern inquiry. I protested my ignorance of local regulations—and once again was interrogated as to identity and movements.

It so happened that my rucksack had been deposited at the railway station cloak-room. This fact having been ascertained, I was duly marched up by my plain-clothes friend, the remainder of my goods being examined on the station platform. Nothing compromising having been found, we returned to the police-barracks, where I was informed that I should be removed to G.H.Q., Buttevant.

In the courtyard, a tender stood waiting, while a dozen soldiers in fighting-order were clambering onto a lorry. I bade farewell to

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

my green friends, who assured me again that they had only done their duty, and whom I assured in the same sense.

I found myself sitting between the driver and a young officer, the escort occupying the body of the car; two hundred yards behind came the lorry with its armed load. The drive that followed was full of interest.

It was growing late. We careered along at thirty-five miles an hour, wide stretches of gorse and heather falling rapidly behind, a white ribbon of road ever diminishing in front. The sun setting behind purple mountains and the high lights of far-off hillsides seemed to lend a new aspect to the sorrows and the beauty of the land. Every two or three miles, patches of loose road material or boulders lying by the roadside proclaimed where no long while before an ambush had been prepared or had taken place. The men behind talked as they had been accustomed to talk in a greater war. "Do you remember such-and-such an ambush?" When we came to corners, the officer grasped his revolver tightly, and every

## SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

now and then looked back to see whether the lorry was keeping its proper distance. Once or twice we met parties of civilians, and when this happened the rifles were raised; once or twice women and children gathering flowers.

Late in the evening we drove up a broad sloping street between grey stone houses to the gates of some large barracks. The place reminded one of Princetown or Dartmoor in its orderliness and bleakness.

There was much shouting and hooting at the gates before they were thrown open and we drew up in front of a wired-in compound on the barrack-square.

The officer on duty appeared.

"Hullo! What's it all about?"

My custodian descended and the two officers held a brief conversation while I was left standing with the guard.

Finally the Intelligence Officer was sent for from his dinner.

"Come along to my office, please!"

My papers were examined, I was asked half a dozen questions and invited to tell everything

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

about myself. My interrogator then announced that he was satisfied as to my identity, dryly adding that he did not think I quite realised where I was.

I was thereupon hospitably entertained at dinner by the Staff of the Kerry Infantry Brigade and heard (from the lips of the Colonel-Commandant) something of conditions of service in Ireland.

"People in England," he said, "don't seem to realise what things are like over here—or else they don't care. Most of the newspapers damn us or take sides with the other people. You've seen for yourself the conditions we get about under. We can't go outside barracks without the risk of being shot in the back. We can't go out walking or out shooting. Only the other day one of my boys went over to a place five miles away on a motor-bike and has not been heard of since."

"Straightforward fighting is our job, but this sort of thing——!" put in someone else.

"They talk about 'patriots' in England," said a major, wearing the D.S.O. ribbon. "Pa-

## SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

triot! Why, fighting the I.R.A. is fighting assassins. It's low, cowardly cunning they excel at. I tell you straight, I'd sooner do another two-and-a-half years in France than the same length of time here."

"They prepare these ambushes," remarked the Intelligence Officer, "lie in wait for you, fire a volley as you pass—they always risk everything on the first effort—then run for their lives. The only thing to be said for them is that they're such rotten bad shots."

"Yes, it's a rum kind of war," said the Commandant. "I often receive deputations from aggrieved Sinn Feiners who are suffering financially through the roads being blocked and bridges destroyed by their own kith and kin. The fact is they are intimidated by their gunmen to destroy the roads, and then ask us to put a guard over them while I repair them!"

This provoked laughter, but the conversation soon became serious again.

"How can you expect anything but reprisals," the D.S.O. major urged, "when our pals

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

and our men's pals are killed like this? If somebody you were very fond of was murdered—*murdered*, mind you! in cold blood—wouldn't you 'see red'?"

"No house is burnt down except in reprisal for an outrage, and then the house of a notorious local Shinner is chosen," added the Colonel-Commandant.

"We English are incapable of hating," another officer declared.

"——even Germans," suggested another. "Don't you remember how in the war one used to see the Tommies handing cigarettes through the barbed-wire cages to men who'd been trying all they knew to kill them an hour or two before. Well, it's the same here. You see our men actually offering cigarettes to these swine who shoot 'em in the back whenever they get an opportunity. That's your English Tommy all over."

"And the worst of it all is, I've only had one leave since August," lamented a young subaltern in the background.

\* \* \* \* \*

## SOLDIERS AND THE BLACK AND TANS

This conversation had a curious because immediate sequel.

As I crossed the barrack square, a free man, I met the officer on duty. He said:

“A young soldier in the East Lancashires \* has just been done in on the road between here and Churchtown. They shot him in the jaw but didn’t kill him, so they turned him over and shot him in the back. . . . You may as well see for yourself.”

He led the way to a building near the barrack gates.

It was as he had said.

\* **Private Fielding**, murdered, April 26th.

## CHAPTER VIII

### KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

FROM a window overlooking the barrack gates at Buttevant Sinn Fein prisoners could be seen washing themselves in the early morning.

They were penned up in a sort of compound. One by one they came out of their wooden hut, blinking in the sunshine, while a lackadaisical sentry watched over them from a platform similar to that which had led to my undoing at Mallow.

The night had not passed undisturbed. In the smallest hours I was awakened by a loud and violent knocking, and the summons of two or three stentorian Irish voices. "Open the door! Open the door!"

The last event of the day had not been calculated to steady the nerves. My heart beat faster and unpleasant recollections began to



## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

crowd upon me until I remembered there was no curfew in Buttevant.

At 7.30 a.m. a curious little procession passed out of the barrack gates.

First came a G.S. wagon in which reposed a sort of box covered with some material like sacking. There followed four Sinn Fein prisoners walking slowly two by two, a file of soldiers with fixed bayonets on either side of them. An officer and escort brought up the rear.

That morning, the 27th, I caught the 9.13 train to Kilmallock. Having been fortuitously conveyed some distance out of my original course, I came to the conclusion that it would be best to leave this part of the country and bear to the West, where things were reported to be "waking up."

The train was crowded, about half its occupants being soldiers and Black and Tans. The majority of these descended at Charleville Junction. Here the first person to catch my eye on the crowded platform was Mr. X. of Cork.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

There he was, smoking a cigarette with his usual air of insolent self-possession. A look of unresponsive recognition passed between us. . . .

Kilmallock is a long, straggling village of grey and white houses. Here Eamon de Valera, son of a Spanish father and an Irish mother, passed his earliest years. One who remembers him at this time describes him as a studious, clever boy of rather wild appearance, attending the Charleville Christian Brothers' School. He afterwards went on to take high honours at the National University, just failing to secure a fellowship at Trinity College. It was during this period doubtless that he first came under Sinn Fein influence. Subsequently he became a school-teacher.

"Down with Sinn Fein! Up England!" was the inscription which greeted one on the walls of a gutted building at the entrance to the village. A little farther on were two more buildings of which only the walls stood.

My call was upon a brewer of the district.

"I only came here a year ago," he said.

## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

“The very evening of the day we got in this affair happened at the police barracks opposite. I was tired after moving furniture all day, and went to bed early, but we were soon awakened by the noise of the firing. Bombs were exploding, Véry lights were going up. We looked out and saw the Sinn Feiners had surrounded the barracks. We could see them running to and fro, and when morning broke the police were shot at as they came out. It was an awful night. A month later the police came back and burnt the houses on either side of the barracks—because, they said, there had been firing from them—and the People’s Hall.”

“What is the general state of feeling in the district?”

“The people only want to settle down. You cannot gauge the real state of feeling by the actions of the I.R.A. They only represent a section of the people. There was a time, of course, when the lads were willing enough to join, but now most of the ardent spirits have been killed or rounded up, and the country boys have to be roped in. I can remember a time,

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

though, when they used to drill openly, in broad daylight, in Co. Limerick, under the instruction of ex-soldiers. That's a funny thing now—some of the hottest Sinn Feiners are ex-soldiers."

"The people generally would be glad of peace on almost any terms, though?"

"They'd be content with a fair measure of Home Rule—yes, Dominion Home Rule. We have no quarrel with England, except that you don't understand us, and never have. Temperamentally, the English and the Irish are poles apart."

"Do you think much mischief is made in the schools?"

"Sinn Fein propaganda, you mean? No. Only, of course, the Irish language is taught."

"Economic ties are very strong between the two countries?"

"Up to a point—yes. Ireland is one of England's best customers for wines, motor-cars, and agricultural machinery. England is Ireland's natural market for eggs and poultry, butter, cattle, and tobacco. Still, I wouldn't

## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

agree that Ireland's trade necessarily depends on England. There are other markets open—for linen and tobacco, for instance."

"People did very well round here during the war, I suppose?"

"We have the finest grazing land in Ireland about here outside Meath. Farmers reaped a rich harvest, but now they're beginning to realise that a slump is ahead. You ought to go and see the creamery down the street."

I followed his advice. At the far end of the village the creamery was working at full pressure, an elderly woman churning butter, a young one hand-skimming, and a man operating the machinery. Tipped into a tank from the milk-cans, the milk was carried through to the separator, and thence to the churn, which made its butter in half an hour. One of the most delectable sights I have ever seen was, on the far side of the separator, a large tank nearly full of thick, yellow cream.

I thought of the creamery at Mallow. . . .

In the train to Limerick I fell into conversa-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

tion with a Buttevant commercial traveller who was full of woes. On his knee lay a little pocket-book in which he had been making up his accounts for the week.

"It costs me £8 a week travelling," he said. "I earn £3 a week. So I'm shutting up shop. The retailers won't buy because the public won't. Down in Tralee I haven't placed a single order worth the name. Houses and shops are constantly raided. Nobody knows what's going to happen next. So nobody will lay in stocks."

"What about the boycott?"

"I don't complain of reprisals on Catholics who deal with bigoted Belfast Protestants. But there you are—Ireland's no longer a decent country for people to earn a living in."

Limerick lay under dust. It was hot. One found a baking station-yard and a long, straight main street suggestive of a Canadian prairie town. How ugly this place is, and how shadeless! And then you discover that the main thoroughfare, O'Connell Street, is known to the inhabitants as "George Street," and

## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

that there is another George Street just round the corner!

The abiding impression of Limerick was of the soldiers wandering through the streets in their curious patrol formation. A line of six men of the Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry in fighting order with arms at the trail came first, followed by a file on opposite sides of the street, then the officer and his n.c.o. in the centre of the roadway, another file of men and another line. They advanced in a leisurely manner, the officer occasionally pulling up somebody crossing the road and questioning him. This spectacle might be seen at all hours of the day.

As to the lorry-loads of Black and Tans and the armoured cars, they were as numerous as in Dublin. And with what a clatter, with what a whirl of dust they careered along that arid main street on their way to or from the barracks! The old-fashioned Cruise's Hotel near the Town Hall had been taken over as a temporary police barracks, so had a large building in Cecil Street, outside which Black and Tans lounged and smoked.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

The first Limerick citizen I talked to was a journalist, who offered the maxim: "Soft soap for Irishmen!"

He meant tact.

He dwelt, as so many had done, upon that which is, indeed, self-evident to any traveller—the temperamental difference between Englishman and Irishman.

"And yet your educated Irishman is the most tolerant person in the world," he declared. "He remembers only to forget."

As an instance of this he told the story of an old Dublin woman who, crossing O'Connell Bridge soon after the Easter Rebellion, met a British officer.

"'Well,' said she, 'you —— —, you ought to be chucked in the Liffey an' left to drown, you ought.'

"'And if he was, you know you'd be the first to jump in and pull him out!' shouted a passer-by.

"That's us all over! But we do want tactful handling. It's no good trying to ride roughshod over an Irishman."



## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

He proceeded to describe how, standing in a corridor of the barracks one day, he had seen a Black and Tan strike an Irish prisoner in the face.

"That man never flinched and he never said a word. He was only a common man, but he bore himself with the dignity of a king."

My informant appeared deeply impressed by the recollection.

"But even things like that," he urged, "and the murder of our Mayors will be forgotten if you treat us generously now."

He harked back to 1914, when Lord Wimborne had entered Limerick to the strains of "God Save the King," amid the acclamations of the populace. He told of how Sinn Feiners who tried to start a counter-demonstration with "God Save Ireland" had had to be escorted down a side-street by the police.

"The people were mad for the war then," said he. "The Government could have done anything with 'em. Now—you see!"

"What actually brought about the transformation?"

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

“Failure to operate the Act of 1912 and discouragement of recruiting. Religion and education have had nothing to do with it. Lord Fitzalan will be neither popular nor otherwise, because he is a Roman Catholic. Balfour and Birrell were the best Chief Secretaries we ever had.”

The economic history of Limerick was that of the majority of Irish towns in 1921—you could read it in the look of the place. Trade bad, nobody buying, no ships coming up the river—that was the tale; and there was not a ship to be seen along the quays. Bacon-curing is the staple industry, but it is fair to add progressive decay had set in before the war. Limerick lacks energy, lacks healthy vitality.

And even while we talked in the hotel smoking-room a revolver shot, followed by two rifle shots, cracked out in the street. I went to the door. My companion smiled.

“It’s down Carey Street in the Curfew area, I expect.”

People were standing on their doorsteps

## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

looking towards the railway station. I walked to the corner. The words "No peace with England!" scrawled on a blank wall stared me in the face. To the left of the station the street was noisy with gossiping women and sprawling children; to the right it stretched broad and straight and silent—empty. The station clock said 7.15.

At dinner that evening in the hotel dining-room, a party of four persons sat down at a table near. They consisted of a father with a flowing dark beard, who wore his hat throughout the meal, of a stalwart son, and of two good-looking daughters. All were very dark, with aquiline features and a Latin grace of manner and expression. It was their gestures, however, their unceasing flow of merriment and *joie de vivre* which impressed one. The girls and the boy never ceased to jest, the father ate solemnly, making a remark about once in five minutes which set the whole table laughing.

Through this pantomimic group—for their remarks could not be heard—was borne in

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

upon one a sense of that temperamental difference which had been so frequently alluded to by Irishmen. The group might have belonged to Paris, to Madrid, to Rome even—never to London.

Later I made my way to the northern outskirts of the city and called upon the Protestant Dean of Limerick. A slender, silvery-haired man greeted me.

"There is not much real poverty here, except through unemployment," he answered in response to a question. "People grew very well off during the war. Bank balances in many cases are three times what they were before the war. Most people would be glad to keep outside politics if they were allowed to. Personally I am on the best of terms with all the farmers about here, Sinn Feiners, Nationalists, or what-not."

"You think a peace could be patched up, and that the country is not entirely for separation?"

"Where there's right—and wrong—on both sides, each must give away something. An

## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

old farmer said to me the other day, 'When a man goes to the fair, you know he asks more for a horse than he expects to get——' and laughed."

"A settlement is possible, then?"

The Dean nodded.

"Is hatred of England taught in the schools?"

He considered a moment.

"I'm sorry to say I'm afraid it is. And that is at the root of all the trouble."

"And religious differences?"

"There are none. Please disabuse yourself of that idea. I personally am on the best of terms with all my colleagues. There is perfect accord between Protestants and Roman Catholics."

"Are the women interested in politics?"

"As much as if not more so than the men. It's difficult to say why."

Dean Hackett returned repeatedly to the necessity of doing everything possible to promote peace.

"Don't say or write anything calculated to

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

make things worse," he adjured. "The trouble with us is that we are always looking back, always harping on the Penal Laws or the Rebellion of '98, always harking back to the bitterness of three hundred years ago. We must 'cast the cup from us' and look forward."

As I walked back to Limerick that evening the brooding quality of the place impressed itself upon me.

Soldiers and girls were strolling arm-in-arm under the new-flowering lilacs and chestnuts, white-clad young men and women were playing lawn-tennis in gardens, old men were smoking and talking on the veranda of a club that overlooks the river. Somewhere near a military band was playing, and I found it eventually huddled away in a yard up an alley, as though ashamed of its tentative efforts at gaiety, of which nobody took any notice except a sentry. At either end of the Sarsfield and Thomond Bridges picquets of soldiers with fixed bayonets were posted. The broad sweep of the river was veiled in misty grey,

## KILMALLOCK TO LIMERICK

through which a church spire above roof-tops and one or two lights vaguely showed. Groups of men lounged about the quays, and the last embers of a sultry sunset touched the windows of some Georgian houses on the farther bank.

Crossing the bridge into Sarsfield Street, I noticed on the right-hand side a small green-shuttered house, over the doorway of which were two rudely-painted shamrocks above a skull and cross-bones. Beneath the latter appeared these strange words:

“And anti-Christ still alive at 4 a.m.? . . .  
And shooting now?”

In Glentworth Street, which leads up to the railway station, I once more came face to face with Mr. X. . . .

## CHAPTER IX

### TALKS IN LIMERICK

**I**N Limerick I met Dr. Sandeman, of Zurich, a distinguished Swiss publicist then on a special mission to study the situation in Ireland as representative of a syndicate of Swiss, Austrian, Czecho-Slovakian, Polish, and Bohemian newspapers. The meeting was especially interesting in view of Liamon de Roiste's hint of a possible settlement on Swiss Federal lines.

Dr. Sandeman's general conclusions after a fortnight's sojourn in the South as the guest of both sides may be summarised as follows:

"You must give Ireland Dominion Home Rule.

"Your Government is not trusted, therefore you must give an earnest of your good intentions by withdrawing the irregulars. I find that they are everywhere condemned.



## TALKS IN LIMERICK

“Fiscal autonomy and foreign relations should rest with Ireland; the garrison and control of the ports might remain with England. But have you anything really to fear from such a little country as this? Is not she bound to you by natural and economic ties?”

Questioned as to the amount of interest taken in the Irish question by the Central European peoples, Dr. Sandeman declared this was considerable.

He supplied the following information regarding his own country:

### COMPARATIVE POPULATIONS

<i>Switzerland</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
3,937,000	4,390,219
(Census, July 1st, 1916)	(Census, April 2nd, 1911)

### COMPARATIVE TOTAL AREA

15,951 square miles	32,531 square miles
---------------------	---------------------

“My country is divided into twenty-two Cantons; Ireland has thirty-two Counties of very similar size.

“The Cantons themselves are not ‘divisions,’

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

but sovereign States which have formed an alliance for certain purposes. Each has complete autonomy except on foreign politics, decision of peace and war, post and telegraph, and certain State assurances which remain with the State Legislature. Each Canton differs from the other in nearly every point, i.e., religious, political, social, industrial, physical, linguistic, yet forms a nation the patriotism of whose members is proverbial.

“Each of the twenty-two Cantons is divided into ‘administrative districts,’ each ruled by a prefect in the French manner, appointed by the Cantonal Authorities. Each Canton, again, has its own legislature, executive and judiciary. The legislature of the Canton is composed of representatives chosen by Cantonal voters in proportion, and is thus a local parliament rather than a county council. All Cantons have the referendum and initiative by which electors can exercise control over their representatives. Twenty thousand signatures are required to obtain the referendum.

“There are two Houses — a Senate and a

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

Chamber of Deputies. Two Senators sit for each Canton and one Deputy for each twenty thousand inhabitants, so that Zugger has one Deputy and Berne twenty.

"We have in our country, as you know, a Militia based on compulsory service."

One of the most temperate and broad-minded men I came across in the South was Mr. S. O'Mara, a big Limerick bacon manufacturer. Of him it was said by a British officer, "If all Sinn Feiners were like O'Mara, this Irish question would soon be settled."

Mr. O'Mara, senior, indeed, belongs to the old school, though there is reason to believe that his views represent a large measure of opinion in the South and West. He is an ex-Mayor of Limerick, and his son is the present Mayor. It was of this son he first spoke, introducing an episode very characteristic of Ireland in 1921.

"Before we discuss the Irish question I must tell you that my son has been arrested this morning by the military and committed to

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

prison for one week. The charge against him, I understand, is of not complying with the orders of the officer commanding here."

These words were spoken with dignity and restraint, though it was possible to perceive that the ex-Mayor felt the matter keenly.

Preliminary questions led him to say:

"The majority in Ireland would prefer complete separation, but would accept a liberal measure of Home Rule for the sake of peace. We must have:

"(1) Ulster in a Dublin Parliament.

"(2) Complete fiscal autonomy.

"(3) Full control of police and full authority, military and otherwise.

"If the proposed 'Dominion Home Rule' included these provisions, then there is a very fair chance of its being accepted by Ireland."

"But the British garrison, and control of the ports?"

"These must go."

"And foreign relations—peace and war?"

"A power of decision equal to that of the other Dominions."

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

"May I ask how you propose to bring Ulster into a Southern Parliament? I understand she is adamant on the question."

"If Ulster and the Southern leaders were brought together they could thresh out a settlement among themselves. This is an Irish question. England must not interfere. Once get Ulster into a Dublin Parliament under safeguards and she would work harmoniously for a united Ireland."

"Don't you think the Government of Ireland Act through the Council of Ireland offers machinery for a permanent settlement?"

"No interest is taken in the Partition Act here because it divides the country, because that division would become accentuated instead of the reverse, and because it would express itself through the boycott of Belfast, as at present, and by means of retaliation between Protestant and Catholic."

"In your opinion are the Irish people hostile to England, or only to the British Government?"

"At present Ireland is hostile to England."

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

But the Irish people are generous and forget their wrongs very quickly."

"Are a majority behind the militant movement, then—I mean the policy of the I.R.A.—or is this tacitly or compulsorily supported?"

"It is tacitly supported—or put it stronger."

"You must remember," Mr. O'Mara added, in words almost identical with those I had heard in Cork, "you must remember, Nationalists have become Sinn Feiners, Unionists Nationalists."

"Are Bolshevik or foreign influences behind Sinn Fein?"

"Not at all."

"Or anti - English propaganda in the schools?"

"Nonsense."

"What has contributed most to bring about the *volte face* from the war enthusiasm of 1914 to the present state of affairs?"

"The bad faith and methods of the British Government."

"I suppose you don't hold a very high opin-

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

ion of Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Hamar Greenwood?"

"Lloyd George is a trickster; Greenwood's a rare fraud."

"Who do you consider the best administrators Ireland has had in your time?"

"Lord Carnarvon was the best Lord Lieutenant we have had; Morley and George Wyndham were the best Chief Secretaries. Balfour was very ruthless, but he passed some good measures for Ireland."

"Looking back at the 1916 Rebellion, what good do you think it did your country?"

"The Easter Rebellion was condemned as a useless waste of life by many Irishmen. It raised the cry of 'England's tyranny' certainly; it gave the impetus to violence. But it was the executions afterwards that left a rankling bitterness."

"In fact, it was a mistake because it was a failure?"

"No. The rising of 1916 gave a new soul to Ireland; she found her soul that day."

"You have given me your opinion as to the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

terms upon which peace can be secured. What are the first steps to be taken towards realising it?"

"The first step to peace is the removal of the Irregular Forces of the Crown; the second, a definite offer by the British Government."

"Would it be a lasting peace or would the cry for a Republic break out again in a few years' time?"

"Given the conditions which I have outlined, Ireland can be counted on as a loyal friend. England, you must bear in mind, is our natural market for eggs, butter, bacon, cattle, and linen. We might find other markets for ourselves, but England is the natural one and always will be."

When I reached the Town Hall I found the atmosphere disturbed. Only the Town Clerk himself — an exuberant Irishman — seemed happy.

"You've heard about our Mayor?" he queried.



## TALKS IN LIMERICK

I answered in the affirmative, and was told that the Deputy-Mayor and Corporation were even then in Council assembled, but would be pleased to receive me in a few minutes.

Meanwhile several citizens of Limerick dropped in—a local journalist who said that it was “a bad day for Ireland when the shootings began,” and a banker who announced that “Ireland does not want violence or complete separation. They are forced on her.”

Incidentally, I came across the “Scheme for Scholarships from Primary to Secondary Schools in County Limerick,” issued by the Limerick County Council. The following extracts seemed to throw some light on a matter about which equal authorities had flatly contradicted one another: \*

\* Too much importance must not be attached to the tone and apparent significance of this Scheme which required the approval of, and doubtless had been approved by, that great Department of State affectionately known in Ireland as “The Department,” or the “D.A.T.I.,” and officially as the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland. This Department was created by Irishmen in 1898 and with it is bound up the whole recent history of Agricultural and Technical Training in Ireland, together with that of Sir Horace Plunkett’s Co-operative Movement.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

### II.—CONDITIONS OF TENURE.

(A) The Primary School from which the pupil comes must have adopted the Gaelic League Education Programme as modified by Dail Eireann, viz.: (*a*) Irish to be the official school language, i.e., Irish to be used for Roll Call, orders, prayers, etc.; (*b*) Irish to be taught for vernacular use to each child for at least one hour per day; (*c*) Irish history to be taught to all pupils.

(B) The Secondary School which the pupil, or his parents or guardians, choose for the holding of a Scholarship shall have adopted (*a*) the Gaelic League Programme for Secondary Schools, viz., Irish to be taught to all pupils for vernacular use; (*b*) Irish history to be taught to all pupils; (*c*) all Examination Papers to be set in both English and Irish, each pupil examined to have permission to answer in whichever of the two languages he may think fit. In examinations in a foreign language the use of that foreign language to be permitted in setting and answering ques-

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

tions. The pupil to be taught at the Secondary School with a view to Matriculation at the N.U.I.

### III.—TENURE OF SCHOLARSHIPS.

The tenure of these scholarships shall be four years, provided the pupil shows satisfactory progress as tested by: (*a*) the periodical school examination; (*b*) the annual school examination at the end of the academic year; (*c*) the special test in Irish and Irish history applied by the Committee's Examiner at the end of each year; (*d*) a satisfactory report from the Examining Board of a Gaelic College, where the pupil will spend a session in the summer of each year at the expense of the Committee, until certified as able to be taught through the medium of Irish. The courses for the Special History Examinations are: At the end of First Year—Story of Ireland (tested Bilingually) of Beata Naom Padraig—Bilingual. At the end of Second Year—Mitchel's History of Ireland and Stair na hEireann Part I. (Eogan o Neactain). At the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

end of Third Year—Last Conquest and Sean A'Daimis, "Eire" (Conan Maol). At the end of Fourth Year—The Irish Wars, by J. J. O'Connell, M.A., and Saothar ar Sean O'Coallaig, T.D.

\* \* \* \* \*

### SYLLABUS.

The following is the list of subjects for examination (written and oral) as may be necessary:

\* \* \* \* \*

AN GAEDILGE.—"Scadna," 50 pp., Part I. (Reading and Dictation). "Aids to Irish Composition," by the Christian Brothers (the whole book).

IRISH HISTORY.—"Catechism of the History of Ireland," by W. J. O'Neill Daunt, Chapters I. to XVIII. inclusive. Christian Brothers' Irish History Reader.

\* \* \* \* \*

ENGLISH.—Poetry—"The Four Winds of Erin," E. Carbery. Literature in Ireland. Irish Verse—Selected, by Yeats. Prose—The Letters of Wolfe Tone; a written Letter or Essay. Reading and Dictation.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Signed) MAURICE FITZGERALD,  
*Secretary to Committee.*

By the time I had digested this document, I was informed that the Deputy-Mayor and Cor-

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

poration were ready to receive me. In the Council Chamber sat four gentlemen at the farther end of a long table. They were—it was evident—coldly furious.

“He had seven days to pay the fine, but they took him on the first day.”

The speaker, Councillor Casey, was a short, dark man with a metallic voice. He belonged to a type I had not so far met—a Sinn Fein Labour leader. In reply to my inquiry he continued vigorously:

“Lorriesful of soldiers were sent to his house this morning, and they dragged him away. Look at this——”

He handed me a typewritten note:

“H.Q., Limerick.

“Sir,—The military Governor has ordered me to request you kindly to attend at the New Barracks on Monday, April 25th, at 11.30 a.m.

“(Signed) J. EASTWOOD,

*Major.*

“For Staff Captain, 18th Infantry Brigade.”

“Should not the military come to the chief citizen of a town instead of summoning him as if he was their servant?”

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

"Limerick's mayors have been—unfortunate?" I suggested.

"Mr. O'Mara, junior, is the third mayor we have elected within sixteen months. O'Callaghan was mayor for twelve months, Clancy for six weeks.

They were both murdered during Curfew hours on the same night." Councillors Griffin and O'Flynn spoke almost in the same breath. "A month earlier a District Police-Inspector had been murdered as he came from church."

"Speaking for Limerick," the Deputy-Mayor remarked impressively, "I say that if we're given an open tribunal of our fellow-citizens, we can—even to-day—bring the murderers of O'Callaghan and Clancy to justice."

For a few minutes we switched off to general politics. Of the prospects of a settlement the Corporation's spokesman would only say, "We leave ourselves in the hands of our elected representatives."

"But," he added, "the whole of Ireland is behind President de Valera. Of Dail Eireann, let me remind you, thirty-two members are in

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

prison, eight in America, and thirty-three at liberty. But it functions! You ask why we stood out of the 1917 Convention? I'll tell you in a word: because we didn't believe Lloyd George was sincere. And we don't believe he's sincere to-day. Let him call Irish representatives together—let him stop this damnable persecution of our people—let him make a definite offer."

"Damnable persecution?"

"Yes — damnable persecution," Councillor Griffin echoed hotly. "Our Member, Mr. Colivet, was arrested two or three months ago. No charge was preferred against him and none has been made yet. This man has been kept in Rathkeale Prison in solitary confinement, suffering from a skin disease and being used as a hostage."

"There are twenty ladies in prison," declared Councillor O'Flynn. "Perhaps you do not realise that, sir. And two thousand five hundred Irishmen all told."

"What about Ulster?" One wanted to get back to the original point.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

"We will give Ulster safeguards," the Deputy-Mayor replied. "But she must come into a Dublin Parliament."

"The religious question, then?"

"With us in the South religion makes no difference. In the North they're bigots."

"Has Bolshevism anything in common with Sinn Fein?"

"No."

"The present state of affairs is ruining the town," declared one Councillor. "Fairs and markets are prohibited; on market days the country people are turned back."

From the Town Hall I repaired to the New Barracks.

The Commandant of the 18th Infantry Brigade, Colonel Cameron, C.B., C.M.G., saw me at once. He said:

"What happened is this. The Mayor was not in the first instance arrested. I wrote him a polite note"—the one already reproduced—"asking him to come up and see me. I wanted to point out to him that I understood he had



## TALKS IN LIMERICK

broken a Martial Law regulation. To this he sent a disputatious reply. I therefore had to order him to come up to barracks. He did not comply and I was therefore forced to arrest him. He was fined £10, with the alternative of a week's imprisonment. He preferred to do the week."

If the Deputy-Mayor and Corporation had been outspoken, the Colonel-Commandant and his Staff were no less frank. The implication upon the Black and Tans in connection with the affair of the Mayors was, I could see, bitterly resented.

"Civilian trials," said Colonel Cameron, "are useless. You cannot get at the truth. Witnesses perjure themselves till they're blue in the face. I am satisfied, however, that Clancy and O'Callaghan were opposed to murder and that it was largely due to them that there had been no attack on the Crown Forces in Limerick for six months prior to the murders on March 7th, 1921. It is a fact that outrages began again exactly a month after their death."

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

I took the opportunity to ask further questions. Colonel Cameron, whose command comprised the counties of Limerick, Clare, and Tipperary, said that it might take four years of guerilla warfare before the I.R.A. could be rounded up.

"But we're making progress. Reprisals, you must see, are inevitable. For instance, the other evening a bomb was thrown at three R.I.C. men and a soldier walking in Carey Street. I have therefore ordered Curfew for 7 p.m. in that area of the town. When an outrage takes place, I order the house or houses of local inhabitants who are known Sinn Feiners to be burnt."

"Is feeling in the town bitter against the military?"

"The fact is, as I have said, that our men got on admirably with the people of Limerick until the murder of the two Mayors. From that date onwards things have woken up. Until then I drove about in my car without an escort. I would not do so now."

I inquired as to the character of the Black

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

and Tans, pointing out certain matters that had been alleged against them.

"I do not say," replied the Colonel-Commandant, "that they have always been all they might be or that there have not been black sheep in the flock. We had to augment the Forces in a hurry, and it was inevitable that discipline should not at first be up to the old R.I.C. standard. What you may not be aware of is that the old Irish police feel far more strongly about Republican outrages than the English recruits. English people don't realise that, and it is not fair to impute any and every outbreak to the new English recruits. . . . Well—we have done a lot of weeding-out, and discipline is now greatly improved."

In conclusion, Colonel Cameron used a memorable phrase:

"These people dwell too much in the past. We must wash out the past before we start afresh."

My last call but one on this busy day was at the gaol.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Armed with an introduction to the Governor, I hoped to see the incarcerated Mayor himself. My request was, however, definitely refused, inasmuch as even his wife could not by prison regulations be permitted this pleasure. Nor, I was informed, was Mr. O'Mara, jnr., himself in a mood to receive strangers. He was at that moment engaged in a discussion on May-fly fishing with an officer of H.M.'s Forces.

Nothing could have been more open-minded, more anxious to place at the disposal of an inquirer such facilities for acquiring information as were at their disposal than the G.O.C. and his Staff. It was indeed by special permission of the former that I was enabled to talk with two interesting denizens of the Internment Camp.

One of these was Michael Colivet, aforementioned as M.P. for Limerick City and member of Dail Eireann, the other a picturesque personality with a rebellious history. In Easter Week this latter personage had served as a captain; during the present campaign he had

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

been associated with various ambushes, and upon one occasion (it was alleged), having been ordered to fill in a trench, had refused, saying that such a task was beneath the dignity of an officer of the I.R.A. On the whole, he thought he would prefer to be shot.

I was escorted down to the Prison Camp by a Staff officer in plain clothes who (I noticed) carried a revolver in his coat pocket. We travelled in a motor-car with an armed guard. The prisoners were confined in a series of wired-in pens like poultry-runs some forty yards long by twenty broad with a wooden living-hut in the centre of each. About a dozen were allotted to each hut. Before being admitted through a regular thicket of barbed-wire to the enclosure and introduced to its occupants, I was made to promise not to hold them in conversation for more than twenty minutes.

Outside the "thicket," two prisoners were talking to their friends—well-dressed ladies, respectable-looking men who might have been schoolmasters or clergymen in mufti.

The Republican officer, H——, came out of the hut first. He is a brawny, jovial-looking fellow, not unlike the late James Connolly, his appearance of hearty and open-hearted good-humour belying some of the deeds in which he is alleged to have taken part. He wore a shirt without a collar, which gave him a more raffish appearance than he perhaps wears in civil life.

He was reluctant to discuss politics. He said:

“I don’t know why I’m here. They’ve held me six months now, and no trial. They’ve never even made any charge against me except that I’m a member of an illegal organisation—the I.R.A. My position is simply this: It is my duty to do what Dail Eireann tells me to do. They are the elected representatives of the Irish people. I merely obey them. We are independent people; we are not the slaves of a foreign power. . . . But here comes my friend. He will do the talking.”

Michael Colivet impressed me as had other Sinn Feiners with his youth, his alertness, and

## TALKS IN LIMERICK

a certain guarded diffidence. He is a small, clean-shaven, sandy-haired man who does not look a day more than twenty-six. He has a self-possessed, quiet manner—a different sort altogether to H——.

Much of what he said corresponded to the sentiments of Barry Egan and Liamon de Roiste. "That is a matter for Dail Eireann," he rapped out repeatedly and with the promptitude of a formula.

"We are not to be treated like little children and told our punishment or told to be good," he protested. "Any concession or negotiation has got to come from Dail Eireann, the elected representatives of the people, and must be agreed upon as between one nation and another."

I inquired whether he considered the Republican movement to be representative of the whole people. The (perhaps) obvious answer came:

"The Irish people had the opportunity of voting for Constitutional Nationalism if they preferred it in 1918. They voted Sinn Fein

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

by an overwhelming majority. You don't want anything plainer than that, do you?"

Colivet was obviously reluctant to answer direct questions directly or to commit himself in any way. The soldier H—— smiled, and assented to whatever his friend said. But on one or two points both were voluble.

"Look at this miserable place! Only two hours exercise a day. Penned up like animals. And no charge against us! They won't tell us what we're here for. But they use us as hostages. A cowardly act, that, to protect themselves!"

"They let us see our friends—well, practically whenever we want to, I'll say that for them," H—— conceded. "And they don't feed us too badly."

It was the using as hostages that rankled. They came back to it again and again—that and the uncertainty of the charge hanging over them, and of the period of their imprisonment.

"I could get released to-morrow if I was



## TALKS IN LIMERICK

willing to promise certain things," H——  
asserted; "but I'm not."

"Time's up!" the Corporal of the guard  
called out. . . .

It had seemed a very brief twenty minutes.

## CHAPTER X

### GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

**N**OTHING remains more strange, and nothing more sinister, in a long history of Irish crime than the murders of the two Mayors of Limerick. Strange and sinister in particular, because here are two of the most prominent citizens of one of the largest towns in Ireland done to death in the same night--and to this day none shall say by whom.

The embittered accusations of the Deputy-Mayor and Corporation, followed by Colonel Cameron's cryptic words, set me investigating:

"Speaking for Limerick, I say that if we're given an open tribunal of our fellow-citizens, we can—even to-day—bring the murderers of O'Callaghan and Clancy to justice."

"The fact is Clancy and O'Callaghan were both quiet, decent, moderate men, and we wanted them. The I.R.A. did not."

## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

Between these two statements and their underlying significance lies a story so peculiar, so tortuous and difficult and underground as to suggest the days of the Star Chamber or of the Inquisition rather than of the year 1921: a world of intrigue, of punishment or reprisal, of accusation and counter-accusation, of suspicion, and semi-certainty—then again doubt. Behind the veil—truth. Then Death. . . . Who shall unravel the truth, or will it ever be unravelled? Will it ever see the light of day?

For with investigation of this half-forgotten crime the plot thickens. Whereas the military swear one thing and the civil another, a third party of unimpeachable probity, acquainted alike with local conditions and with the deceased men, believes that the murders were committed by Sinn Fein itself. Mrs. O'Callaghan's letters to the Press have spoken in an opposite sense. A special correspondent of one of the great London newspapers, present in the city at that time and well acquainted with the victims, agrees with her view. The motive alleged, a reprisal by the police for the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

murder one month earlier of a police inspector on his way to church.

All but convinced by this evidence when I repaired to the New Barracks, I there met with a flat denial. A commentary upon the state of the town, though an inexplicit one, stares one in the face almost opposite the barrack gates—writings on a wall:

“PUG. MQ. HOAN. REBES. ‘Up B. & T.’ ”

“The best proof of what we say,” urged a Staff officer, “is to be found in a fragment of a letter addressed to the Commandant, I.R.A., Limerick, and captured during a raid on a Dublin house. The sense of it is:

“We’ve sent you four hundred rifles. What are you doing with them?”

The word of an officer of H.M.’s Forces can no more easily be doubted in 1921 than in 1914.

“The murders followed very soon after, and from that day things have ‘woken up.’ As to

## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

their having taken place during curfew hours—upon which fact great stress has been laid—everybody knows that on certain nights of the week it is, or was, possible to slip through the curfew patrol. Our men cannot be everywhere at once. I may add that of two Black and Tans who were definitely named as having taken part in the crimes one was abroad at the time, the other on in-lying picquet.”

A great deal more was said. There was a deal of mystery in the night of the happenings—signals by lighted cigarette from dark doorways, a sentry’s failure to challenge and his denial that it was his duty so to do, men seen by a doctor (after the second murder) hurrying across Sarsfield Bridge, and so forth. I went into the story in some detail because it is the particular one among many of its kind in Ireland which came my way. The very fact of Sinn Fein being suspected of having done to death two of its leading representatives under such ferocious circumstances, seems to shed a shaft of baleful and unforgettable light into the underworld of that time.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Indeed, one does not need to be convinced that the real history of the country during two years past is little more than half-known now, that much of it probably never will be known, that a man has to dig out and unearth the truth for himself, that, in short, the recent condition of the country has been a "history within a history."

While we were still discussing these matters a plain-clothes constable entered the room and announced that he had just run to earth and captured two of the rebels concerned in the bomb-throwing at policemen a few nights before. They had been found hiding in a hay-loft five miles from the city and had not offered resistance.

"That'll be a swinging job, won't it?"

"Perhaps. . . ."

This led to the subject of the I.R.A., its weapons and methods.

In a corner of the room where the Staff worked stood two large wooden boxes containing various sorts of ammunition captured

## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

from the I.R.A. Taking up a handful I found split bullets, soft-nosed bullets, together with a curious wire contrivance stripped from the cartridge and capable of inflicting terrible laceration. A bandolier and a green peaked cap of the I.R.A. hung on a peg. Half a dozen rifles of patterns varying from the old Mauser and Winchester Repeater to the Lee-Enfield (Mark VI and VII) and a sort of blunderbuss that looked like an elephant gun, stood against the wall. The ammunition included German, French, Service, and Nos. 5 and 6 sporting cartridges.

"The swine!" exclaimed an officer. "If I caught one of them with these things on him I'd shoot him in cold blood with the greatest pleasure."

He seemed to mean that.

The organisation of the Republican Army, I learnt, was based on Brigade Areas commanded by commandants, with captains controlling bands of twenty-five to fifty men. A Brigade Area might be called upon to find a given number of men for a particular opera-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

tion. There were also Flying Columns which operated mainly in the mountainous districts, avoiding main roads and never staying more than two days at one place. They might descend suddenly upon a district to carry out a raid or ambush, and would then quarter themselves upon the inhabitants of that district, demanding board and lodging and making the peasants responsible for their safety during their stay.

"We don't worry much about the rank and file," the Intelligence Officer continued. "It's the leaders we want, rather particularly Mike Collins and Richard Mulcahy. Your average ambusher is an ignorant peasant who has a gun put in his hand, is herded to the scene of an ambush, and told to loose it off. That sort bolts at the first opportunity. Here, in Limerick, which is an I.R.A. Brigade Area, we have about six hundred volunteers. We know them all. The most desperate characters, the men definitely 'on the run,' keep to the mountains. Presumably they enjoy the life. Anyway, they know they'll be shot if they're



## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

caught, and I suppose they reckon on getting amnestied one day if they're not."

The subject of hostages was again brought up. I mentioned what Michael Colivet and H—— had said.

"Oh! they loathe it, I know," was the Court-Martial officer's comment. "But what do you expect? I'm not going to get done in with these chaps skulking behind their barbed-wire entanglements! Some of them sulk on the job and some of them make the best of it in a sporting spirit. I always rag them a bit. 'Well, Paddy,' I say, 'who's for it to-day—you or me? Because if I go, you're going, too, you know.' And sometimes they laugh and sometimes they look murder. But they know we mean it. . . ."

An extract from a secret operations report undated and captured at an I.R.A. headquarters gives the situation from another angle.

". . . We took cover in an old rath and waited there about twenty minutes. One of our men crawled out about three hundred yards to a civilian and learned from him of a certain way out that was clear of the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

enemy. We moved for this point and at last got clear of our pursuers.

"The Officer Commanding fought bravely and seemed to die a happy and painless death. He was at Confession and Communion with all our men only three days before. The wounded man struggled on gamely. It was impossible to render first-aid owing to the heavy fire of the enemy, and he bled a great deal.

"The Brigade-Quartermaster displayed extraordinary coolness and daring throughout, and were it not for him and the O.C. we were done for.

### "THE TRENCHING OF ROADS

"The trenching of roads which is now carried out all over Ireland has, in many districts, rendered the enemy's road transport practically useless. An example of this was given in the Firies area of Co. Kerry in the last days of April. A decision to round up all Republican troops in the area was taken by the local Military Headquarters. The operation was to have lasted several days, and a great body of troops were to have been employed upon it. Information of this operation reached the local Republican Headquarters, and a few hours before it was timed to take place all the roads in the area were deeply trenched. The first party of the enemy arrived soon afterwards in fourteen lorries, but was unable to reach the district marked for the round-up. After an unsuccessful effort to overcome the difficulty the enemy withdrew without a single prisoner."

## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

It was at Limerick that I read the Bishop of Killaloe's astonishing Easter Pastoral, breathing fire and brimstone against England; also a letter from a Co. Waterford parish nurse, telling a long tale of persecution at the hands of Sinn Fein on account of her ministrations to the wives and families of the local R.I.C.

More illuminating than either of these, however, because verifiable, was the case of W., a skilled mechanic, and his wife. To hear their story was to throw another shaft of light into this underworld of Ireland. Of this man the Protestant Bishop of Limerick has written:

"I entertain the highest opinion of his character. He is a skilful workman; and in health could earn his living well."

I found the old couple occupying the back-bedroom of a small cottage. W., a good-looking bearded man, 69 years of age, was lying in bed, the pallor of his features testifying to a long and grievous illness. He told his story with a dignity and restraint that were impressive.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

He is an Englishman. Having been advised thirteen and a half years ago that the milder climate would be beneficial to his wife's health, he migrated to Tipperary, where he had been offered work. The couple afterwards moved to Co. Limerick, where they dwelt for the next eleven years. They found themselves the only English people in the place. They set up a shop, and were at one time earning as much as £5 and £6 a week. They got on well with their neighbours, taking no interest in politics, but keeping outside them as much as possible.

The first change occurred after the 1916 rebellion. A subtle hostility began to manifest itself among the neighbours; their custom fell off; when they went into other shops, they were told English customers were not wanted. In 1917, when Mr. de Valera visited the district, definite signs of enmity became apparent. One day a procession passed their windows, shouting "Bloody Protestants!" "To hell with the King!"

Thereafter the women became particularly hostile. "The women are always worse than

## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

the men," said Mrs. W. A woman, who had hitherto carried water for the old couple, was threatened that if she did not desist her house would be burned. At this time W. wrote direct to Sir John Maxwell, and for a while the persecution ceased.

A climax came, however, one evening in September, 1918, when two men passing W., who was smoking his pipe at his shop-door—"waiting," as he described it, "for his dog to come in"—gave him a push, saying "Garn yer bloody Englishman!" "I righted myself and said, 'What do you mean by this sort of behaviour?' One of them gave me a violent kick in the stomach."

"I heard him cry out," interposed Mrs. W. (who was now weeping) "and ran to the door. I found him lying on the ground in great pain."

The couple then reported the matter to the police, who advised them to take no notice. A Roman Catholic priest, who happened to be president of the local Sinn Fein court, recommended them to bring their case before that

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

tribunal. They replied they would rather die than do so.

By this time all their friends had deserted them with the exception of the clergyman. Having nowhere to go they were unable to leave the place, and had, in any case, no means of moving their possessions. Internal complications had developed, as a result of the kick, and W. was operated on three times within twelve months. In the spring of 1920 they were warned by their landlord, a Sinn Fein saddler, to leave, with the words "If you don't clear out, you'll be chucked out." They were in a very sad plight. Fortunately the police did not at once serve the warrant for eviction, on account of the doctor's certificate, but the matter was taken to a Sinn Fein court.

Finally in July, 1920, they received information that they were to be turned out on the following Sunday night. The military must have received information to this effect, because they came on Saturday night with a lorry and guard, and conveyed the couple to Limerick, giving them one hour's notice to

## GLIMPSE INTO AN UNDERWORLD

pack up. W. managed to obtain a small amount of work with a firm in the town. When this ceased he attempted to get work of his own, but without success. Later in the year he underwent another operation for cancer, the result of his internal injuries.

The couple finally wrote to Lord French for assistance, and received a visit from two police sergeants, but nothing more was heard of the matter. They found good friends, however, in the military and among the ladies in the country around, and were eventually enabled to move to Dublin, where the man went into hospital. After a short interval they were brought over to England, where treatment is being carried on, with, it is hoped, some chance of success.

## CHAPTER XI

### TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

**A**PRIL 30th was market-day in Birr. And from about ten o'clock onwards small donkey-carts, driven by ragged-looking peasants and containing poultry, vegetables, a calf, potatoes, eggs, a pig, came bowling into the little town. There were farm-wagons laden with hay, seed-corn, roots and other produce, there were governess-carts driven by farmers' wives, and motor-cars; there were bicyclists. Altogether Birr presented a lively appearance. . . .

The heat-wave continued. The sun scorched the Duke of Cumberland's column in the centre of the square, that column which everybody told you was any day likely to tumble down. The roadway was an inch deep in dust; they had pulled down the blinds in the County Club. Two or three sleepy Black and Tans lounged



## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

on the steps of the yellow building opposite which was their home.

In the picturesque chestnut-shaded street which leads from the square to the Castle—hay-wagons. Follow the narrow twisting lane between the outer castle-wall and a row of grey cottages—potatoes. Rows of donkey-carts, rows of donkeys. Turn into a yard on the left-hand side—pigs. Pigs and a few sheep and a throng of red-faced, gaitered men talking pigs. Pigs talking too, squealing, grunting pigs, protesting pigs. Further along the street—tethered in couples, fluttering, helpless, and tumbled together in feathery squawking heaps upon the pavement, crammed into crates—poultry. Hens gasping with heat, gasping for air—a cruel sight. At the corner of the main street—calves. Calves netted and snared in little carts, and groups of dealers or farmers or smallholders talking calves. Confusion, too, confusion of backing carts, lazy donkeys, herded cattle, and bawling men and women. Where the pavement broadens, forming a kind of *cul de sac*—eggs. Heaps and heaps of

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

eggs—mountains of eggs—housewives buying, and selling eggs. Among the eggs, squatting, with their backs against the wall, two ancient gipsies, looking like automatised mummies done up in rags—the man tending his feet. Then vegetables, and all along the main street such throngs of respectable-looking farmers, farmers' wives and disreputable-looking peasants, that one chances a kick from an ass and walks in the roadway. The shops, too, crowded. A couple of soldiers stroll by, a couple of R.I.C. men. People look curiously at you sometimes, make remarks to each other about you. You find yourself counting the number of green ties, green scarves, green costumes. . . .

The market-luncheon begins at two. There assemble in the dining-room of the inn a young Church of Ireland clergyman, two farmers, a commercial traveller. All know each other, all are evidently in the habit of meeting weekly. They reply to your "good morning"—and regard you with suspicion.

Conversation dwindles, then ceases alto-

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

gether. Essays upon the weather, the market, the future of the crops, and the architectural peculiarities of Birr—with special reference to the Duke of Cumberland—meet with monosyllables. Thwarted and still-born, you retire: silence reigns except for the glad symphony of eating.

Finally you become conscious of definite, pointed hostility. . . .

Such is Birr: Birr which lies on the borders of King's County and Tipperary, Birr which was the first place come to outside the martial law area, and therefore the first market, Birr which is sometimes called Parsonstown.

Here definitely one leaves the South, entering the less actively rebellious but more problematical Midlands.

"This is a Constitutional island in a sea of Sinn Fein," observed a citizen as we strolled along the quiet road that leads to Galway under the walls of the castle in the cool of the evening. "Birr and the district around it have always been loyal, chiefly, I suppose, because it's been a garrison-town since time immemo-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

rial, because a lot of the soldiers—and officers, too—have married and settled down here. The town has not suffered in any way—touch wood!—our local Black and Tans are a well-behaved lot, and we've never so far had curfew. At the Local Government election, out of twenty-one elected candidates, only four were Sinn Feiners. You can't say that of many towns in Ireland!"

I agreed.

"But," he went on, "it's only like that in Birr itself and within a radius of two or three miles. Tullamore you'll find a much warmer spot. The political change there has only come about in the last few years though. In 1914 North Tipperary was so pro-British as to be positively Jingo. Hundreds of men volunteered to join up—and were told to go home again. Now all Tipperary, as you know, is red-hot Sinn Fein."

"What are the chief reasons for the change?"—a usual question.

"The blunders of the Government. If the Asquith Act had been applied in 1914, even

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

though Ulster had fought it, all this trouble would have been avoided. War or no war, it would have been worth while."

"And then?"

"Well, the Easter Rebellion, and the executions after it, brought the whole country to its feet. Coming to later days, the repeated executions—in Cork and Dublin—and the rule of the Crown Forces have made for greater and more bitter resentment every day."

"By 'Crown Forces' I suppose you mean the Black and Tans?"

"The whole country is up in arms against them, but in Tullamore and Mullingar you'll find there's feeling against the Regulars too. This feeling may rankle, it may last—that depends on the settlement. A more dangerous thing is that the younger generation are growing up in an atmosphere of hatred of England, with recrimination as a birthright and revenge as a legacy."

"You think there is dislike of England then?"

"There is. And it's increasing because it's

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

felt among us that the English *people* could put a stop to all this if they chose—could insist on a settlement. As to the Government, it's hopelessly mistrusted. Whatever the Government does must be preceded by a pledge or pledges of sincerity."

"By the Government you really mean Lloyd George and Hamar Greenwood?"

The worthy fellow laughed.

"We've a saying here, 'Don't call it a lie, call it a Greenwood!'"

"And the Prime Minister?"

"Words, all words!"

"You see, these people don't understand Ireland," he explained. "Behind all the trouble, you've got to recognise an almost complete divorce of character and idea and point of view as between the average Englishman and the average Irishman. Individually they like one another but nationally they've never understood one another—perhaps never will."

"The Government of Ireland Act——"

"Nobody has any use for the Government of Ireland Act hereabouts. It will fail. Finan-

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

cially it's unsound, the system of nomination of the Senate is all wrong, the principle of partition fatal. The Bill's not worth talking about."

"What sort of settlement can you visualise then?"

"Dominion Home Rule perhaps, but it must include Ulster and fiscal autonomy. Yes—something like a Provincial Federative scheme on Swiss lines is a conceivable basis of solution, but economically you cannot put Munster and Connaught on a par with Leinster and Ulster, you know."

While we were discussing the difficulties of a good relationship being established between England and the United States with the Irish Question still "in the air," a lorry-load of soldiers singing and shouting, with rifles levelled, approached at furious speed and dashed by in a cloud of dust.

My friend, who had shown signs of uneasiness, said,

"You've got to be careful of these gentry when they're like that."

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

I questioned him about the economic condition of the countryside.

"King's County, of course, is mainly tillage and therefore prosperity is less pronounced here than in dairy countries, but still it's been very great."

There was, so far as he knew, no Sinn Fein propaganda in the schools and no Russian money behind the Sinn Fein movement.

"But," he added, "there's plenty of American."

My next conversation at Birr was with a certain John Dooley, member of the King's County Council and of the 1917 Convention.

He began to speak at once of this abortive but significant event incident of recent Irish history.

"The result of the Convention split on a hair. Apart from the Nationalists, who wanted an immediate grant of fiscal autonomy, only the Ulster lot stood out of the agreement — and the Ulstermen were obstructionist. What the Government asked for was 'substantial agree-



## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

ment.' That is exactly what they got. So they promptly turned down our Report because it was not unanimous."

"The fact is," my Nationalist friend went on disgustedly, "Lloyd George only thought of the Convention in order to fool people and keep them busy. Can you wonder that a Government led by him is mistrusted?"

"What do you think of the prospects of a settlement?"

"Ulster remains as ever, the crux of the question. But I am convinced that if a Parliament sat in Dublin, Ulster would soon want to come into it. The Partition Act is useless if only because nobody in the country wants it except Antrim, Armagh, and Down. Far from making for a united Ireland, under it North and South would steadily drift apart. You can see for yourself that the Council of Ireland is unfairly composed—twenty representatives of the South and twenty of the North! Under the Act two sets of officials would be needed, so that half the country's income would be wasted on running its machinery. Have a

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

referendum in the Ulster counties for participation in the Northern or Southern Parliament—that might point a way out of it.”

“And fiscal autonomy?”

“There should be free trade between England and Ireland, and a mutually-chosen Commission could sit to decide what duties are to be imposed on foreign goods.”

“You see under present conditions,” Mr. Dooley continued, “the cleavage between North and South is being accentuated every day. Take the Agricultural Board, for instance. There you have a semi-official body drawn from the whole of Ireland, a body that has always worked very well up till now. Now it’s a farce.”

“What in your opinion is the shortest way to peace?”

“Raise Martial Law and remove military government. Give us fair treatment, I say, and the present bitterness will soon be forgotten.”

“Is this bitterness anti-English in origin or anti-Government?”

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

“There’s no personal hostility to English people here but there is resentment, deep resentment, that they do not help Ireland or interest themselves in her difficulties. As to the present policy of the Crown, all moderate people are being alienated by it. Every Unionist of note in this district, for instance, has become a Constitutional Nationalist. The old Nationalists have become Sinn Feiners.”

The words were almost identical with those so often reiterated in Cork.

“All the older men in this county are Nationalists, and no Nationalist will have the Partition Act at any price. Make up your mind to that!”

I mentioned the recent appointment of a Roman Catholic Lord Lieutenant.

“The question of his religion is of no political significance,” was Mr. Dooley’s rejoinder. “We don’t care tuppence what religion a man professes. Religion and politics are essentially different things in Southern Ireland.”

On the subject of local conditions, he said:

“Farmers are well-off enough. There is no

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

emigration, so their families do the work free. Unemployment is about normal, but the working classes are badly off really, for work is spasmodic. There's very little buying and selling. Shopkeepers want to keep their retail stocks low."

A noticeable characteristic of this placid oasis in the heart of stormy Ireland was its normal daily and social life, the apparently well-to-do contentment of its inhabitants. In the market-square of an evening there was always a busy going to-and-fro. Black and Tans played football with the local youths, young ladies in white tennis frocks might be seen riding homeward on bicycles or starting up their cars. Cows strolled casually through the streets after milking.

I called upon a local squire, and found a charming country place with its equipment of lawns and gardens and a park, permanently inhabited. Nowhere in the country districts did the landed gentry appear to be disturbed in their normal habits by local conditions.

A well-known resident of the district drew

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

my attention to the record of Birr in the war. Birr contributed a higher proportion of volunteers to the Army than any other town in Ireland. "Early in 1914," he said, "twenty-six out of thirty-seven of my employees joined the Army."

That religion as a factor in daily affairs cannot altogether be discounted outside Ulster is shown by the following incident:

Before an Urban District Council in King's Co. came three applications by its employees under the Government grant to meet the extra cost of living. One of the applicants was a Roman Catholic, the other two Protestants. The population is predominantly Catholic, the proportion when the matter came to a vote being eleven to nine.

Every Catholic member of the U.D.C. had been zealously mobilised beforehand to ensure this majority. In the upshot the Catholic applicant was awarded an increase of £60 under the grant, while the two Protestants were awarded £5 each.

The views of the resident in question proved

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

to be similar to those of his neighbours, though he claimed that the majority of King's Co. farmers are really Conservative, but dare not say so. They had enjoyed under the Union unprecedented prosperity, though now perhaps beginning to realise that they were in for some lean years.

"The South does not want a change, but people would be glad to accept a generous measure of Dominion Home Rule if clearly offered. The best solution of the Ulster question would be a plebiscite. Fiscal autonomy to be granted to Ireland, control of the Army, Navy, and foreign policy to remain as heretofore, the Irish contribution to the National Debt to be agreed upon. But," he added, "hostility to England is growing, though not in this district. The Black and Tans have been quiet here, but unless they are brought under discipline elsewhere there can be no peace in this land."

One of the most picturesque personalities I came across in this part of Ireland was Archdeacon Ryan, of Birr. Indeed, there was not

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

a little in common between this fragile-looking, shy-mannered and unworldly priest and the steel-fibred leaders of Sinn Fein whom I had talked with in Cork. There was the same—how shall one say?—delicate adjustment of mind, softness of voice and manner, strain of poetry, faint perfume of idealism which mollifies, or appears to, the rigid nationalism.

“Look back at our history—have we much to thank you for?” These were the Archdeacon’s opening words. “Of course, we have some things to thank England for, nobody would deny it, and in some ways you perhaps have been badly treated. But you’ve offered us in the last twenty-one years only a fraction of what is our right.”

I inquired to whom in modern years he considered Ireland owed most.

“The best Chief Secretary we ever had was Morley; the best Lord Lieutenant, Lord Spencer.”

Archdeacon Ryan’s words grew in intensity as he went on.

“If Irishmen thought they could get a Re-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

public now, they would be glad of it. Given a free election, the majority of the people would undoubtedly vote for remaining outside the British Empire. Not that there is any personal dislike of Englishmen, but there is—and always has been—hatred of British rule. We are a separate nation. Wouldn't you like to be master in your own house? . . . If English people want to understand us, they ought to read more history."

He paused. Then:

"Nobody trusts the present Government. The Partition Act is a useless farce; nobody wants it. A terrible account lies at Sir Edward Carson's door."

"But the country has prospered under the Union—is probably better off now than it has ever been?"

"Farmers and shopkeepers are well off here in King's Co., not the common people."

The Archdeacon went on to say that wages were £2 a week as compared with 14s. before the war, but work was not regular and all men had idle periods, especially agricultural



## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

labourers, masons, slaters, carpenters, painters. There was no building going on; there were a hundred unemployed in Birr alone. If wages were two and a half times greater, prices were nearly the same, e.g. \*

Milk .....	8d. a quart.
Eggs .....	3s. a dozen.
Meat .....	2s. a lb.
Potatoes .....	2s. a stone.
Coal (retail, per cwt.) .	£5 a ton.

“Potatoes,” he said, “are seldom the sole diet nowadays. American meat is nearly always eaten, though it is of poor quality. Bread and tea are staples. A certain amount of porter is drunk, but there is practically no drunkenness.

“Peat, by the time it is dug and carried, is nearly as dear as coal. Nowadays only about one man in twenty has a donkey-cart of his own.”

Questioned on another point:

“The story of anti-English propaganda in

\*This was in May.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

our schools is a damnable lie," said Archdeacon Ryan emphatically. "Nor do our women interest themselves in politics. They have too much else to do."

"Can you suggest, then, how peace can be brought to this unhappy country?"

"If we can get fair play we shall not be on strained relations with our neighbours," was the reply. "Let us set up housekeeping on different lines, and we shall get on very well. But the last five years will leave a bad mark in the history of English administration."

"By that you mean——?"

"The first step to peace is the control of the Crown Forces. If you let loose a lot of young men without character or control to do as they will, of course they get out of hand and break the law."

"But the I.R.A.?"

"The I.R.A. is inspired by pure patriotism. The ideals of the After-War were largely responsible for the rapid evolution of Sinn Fein out of the old Nationalism. Those ideals Eng-

## TALKS IN THE MIDLANDS

land has forgotten. But those are our ideals still."

Archdeacon Ryan's last word was:

"You cannot kill the soul of a people. You can no more do so than I can kill your soul."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE TULLAMORE ROAD

**A** MAY DAY sun baked down upon the market square of Birr. It was early yet, and Sunday; the square was empty but for a few stray folk on their way to Mass. I hoped to walk the twenty-two miles to Tullamore by tea-time and, allowing for accidents, to cover at least half the distance in advance of the noon-day heat.

The whitewashed and dun houses, the new-looking church on the first straight stretch out of the town were quickly left behind. There followed a bosky park-like country, uphill and down, the road ribboning ahead in long steady gradients. Green ridges rose on either hand, masses of yellow-prinked gorse filled the hollows, hawthorn in blossom and the whitish pink of crab-apple trees here and there broke the

## THE TULLAMORE ROAD

green of hedgerows and fir-trees. Green was the prevailing tone of the countryside—a green so vivid and fresh and dew-sparkling as to suggest that a brand-new super-beautiful world had been born in the night.

Mountains dreamed in the east. Slieve Bloom dreamed in blue-grey majesty of mist, a hazy mirage lay upon the peaks, a bluish film of heat above the intervening country. After the first two or three miles wide, flat spaces of brackish-brown bog opened up between the road and the mountains.

A few people passed at first—three men riding bicycles townwards, a man and a boy driving a donkey-cart with a load of peat, a man herding cows from one field to another. All nodded or said “Good morning.” Two wild-looking women came up behind in a donkey-cart, followed by some girls and men on bicycles, who turned down a side-road, being apparently on their way to Mass at a neighbouring village.

Three miles out a wide, deep trench had been dug across the road—a trench just wide enough

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

and just deep enough to wreck any vehicle that should attempt to compass it. A long, empty stretch between the bog and the hillside followed, at the end of which three holes, of the size and depth of shell-holes, had been dug triangular-wise in the roadway, leaving a narrow pathway for the foot-passenger, but ensuring certain perdition to bicycle or car.

The chief characteristic of the remaining seven miles to Kilcormac was its extreme loneliness. Only at one place, some children were sprawling outside a broken-down farmstead which otherwise betrayed no semblance of life, although one suspected that its inhabitants were watching from the interior.

For miles at a stretch the only sign or sound was the hovering shadow and far-away whistle of a sparrow-hawk, the "ting-ting" of greenfinches and chaffinches in the hedgerows, the melancholy piping of redshank from the bog, the cries of black-headed gulls which, doubtless nesting beside some nearby tarn, continually swept and swooped above the road. Yellowhammers vied in hue with the brilliant gorse,

## THE TULLAMORE ROAD

butterflies flickered along the grassy border. Goats, cows, and donkeys completely independent of control made this their feeding-ground, or lay asleep in the dust of the road.

A group of young men standing in the sunny Kilcormac village street eyed me suspiciously. I stopped at the inn, the landlord of which, to my surprise, served me with a will, pressed me to sit down and rest in his cool stone parlour, and finally refused my offer of payment.

I decided, after a quarter of an hour's rest, to press on and break the backbone of the journey. After crossing a bridge that spanned a gurgling rocky stream, signs of Republican activity became more apparent. Trees recently felled lay by the roadside, some trenches that had been dug had evidently been filled in. I came suddenly up against a huge barrier.

This was at a point where the road curved round the flank of a hill and was shaded by trees. Four heavy beech-trunks interlaced with boughs had been thrown across it, forming a twelve-feet high obstacle not dissimilar to, though far more substantial than, a fence at

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Aintree. To circumvent this I climbed through a hedge, crossing the corner of a field, and joined the road through another hedge. The white walls of a farmhouse gleamed through foliage at a short distance; three hundred yards beyond the main obstacle a stiff fence of boughs had been erected, and fifty yards beyond this again was a newly dug trench. Of human or other being there was neither sight nor sound, the crow of a cock being the only sign that the farmhouse was inhabited.

But a mile further on a shifting patch of blue vividly contrasted with the hillside's emerald green. A dark-haired handsome girl accompanied by a child came down to the roadside.

"And where might you be making for?"

"Tullamore."

"Have you your fiddle with you?"

The girl looked meaningly at my rucksack.

"Are you not the fiddler from Tullamore? Will you play us a tune?"

"I am travelling through Ireland. Perhaps I shall write an account in the newspapers."



## THE TULLAMORE ROAD

“Is that so? Will you give me one then?”

To be taken by the same person for a local fiddler and a vendor of newspapers is not everybody's experience. Our colloquy continued for some minutes. When I continued my journey the girl and the child were laughing amazedly, still unable to make me out. . . .

After a while I sat down to rest near a cottage. An unkempt peasant woman brought me a glass of milk and, as the publican had done, refused payment. At the back of the dark cabin's interior I espied a young man lying on a bed. Half a mile farther on a figure stood on the skyline at some distance from the road, watching me intently. It continued to watch until I was out of sight.

My feet began to blister, thirst increased, and the heat raised a mirage over everything. Another four miles brought me to a public-house at cross-roads. Half a dozen youths leaning against the wall of the inn cast anything but friendly glances at me and answered my question as to the distance to Tullamore gruffly. At this moment five young men on bicycles rode

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

up from a side-road and, dismounting, joined in conversation with the original group. From the lowering glances directed at me, I realised that I was the object of their attention, but decided that there was no use in hanging about. After walking a few hundred yards, I had an instinctive intimation of some one following. Sure enough, as I looked over my shoulder, a man came into sight round a bend in the road. I waited for him to come up. A middle-aged peasant, he spoke with an air of surly suspicion and inquired sarcastically whether I had had much difficulty in getting along the road. I replied that I had encountered—obstacles. We walked alongside for nearly half a mile, speaking laconically of the crops and the weather. He then turned into a field and left me with, as I thought, a rather sinister grin. Feeling certain now that something was “in the wind,” I plodded on apprehensively, not looking back. Another half-mile brought me to a place where a large fir-wood on one side of the road faced a bog on the other. I suddenly heard the rustle of bicycle-wheels close behind and, looking

## THE TULLAMORE ROAD

round, was confronted by the five young men on bicycles.

“Stop! Hands up!”

They leapt off and laid their bicycles by the road. The leader of the party, a dark, gipsy-faced fellow of about twenty-two, with a mop of matted hair and a somewhat ferocious expression, seized my arms with a policeman's grip, while another, who closely resembled him, dragged off my rucksack with no light hand and passed it to his companions. All the young men wore caps and dark suits of clothes. My pockets were turned out, my purse, containing several £1 notes and other trifles, being taken. I was then ordered to sit down by the roadside.

The half-hour that followed was much less than pleasant. Innocuous tourist though I was, friend of Ireland though I believed myself to be, the little slip of paper with which I had armed myself down-country alone seemed to stand between me and a peremptory fate. For to the rest of my identifications and references, which filled a large envelope, my captors paid no attention whatsoever. My eyes wandered

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

repeatedly to the bog and my thoughts to the number of people who had lately been found in bogs with brief notes attached to them. On a parallel road just a week ago (I graphically recalled) a police inspector had been kidnapped and had not been heard of since.

Meanwhile the five Republicans were busying themselves with my mundane possessions. The contents of the rucksack lay in the road, my papers (and incidentally my pyjamas) were being dismembered. I could hear one of the party (who seemed to be a sort of Intelligence Officer) reading aloud the wording of my precious slip of paper. Another seemed profoundly interested in Justin McCarthy's "Outline of Irish History"; a third was perusing the hieroglyphics in my note-book. A long muttered conversation followed, during which the only words that caught my ear were "man" and "road."

At last the leader turned from the group. "I think the man's all right."

I was thereupon handed back the contents of my pockets and curtly told to count my money,

## THE TULLAMORE ROAD

which (out of politeness) I omitted to do (but which I afterwards did and found correct). I now noticed that the three subordinate members of the party were decent, respectable-looking youths of ages between eighteen and twenty-one. They helped me to put my things together and lifted my rucksack onto my shoulders.

We parted with mutual "good afternoons."

Two miles short of Tullamore, the bridge spanning a swift-flowing little river had been blown up—so thoroughly demolished at the centre, in fact, as to leave a chasm too wide to jump. The only alternative was to wade the stream—no unpleasant task for swollen feet—and to make a detour through some birch woods to a point where it was possible to join the road again.

That was the last physical obstacle. But, walking into Tullamore rather conspicuously dusty and a traveller, battery after battery of coldly hostile glances were directed at me by men who scowled as I passed, scowled after

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

me, scowled up at the window of the inn where I sat at dinner. Everybody seemed to see in an English stranger a potential spy. At first I was inclined to put this feeling down to an undue sensitiveness induced by the events of the day; but the veracity of it was confirmed next morning when I was openly reviled by an apparently sober and respectable Irishwoman on the railway station platform. The first remarks that caught my ear were: "I said I *will* not be walked over. I can only die once, and I'll be happy to give my life for Ireland." The lady's choicest sentiments then became unprintable; suffice it to say that everything not good enough for Irishmen was "good enough for English dogs," and that the majority of her sentences ended with the exhortation, "Shoot me if you like! Yes—trample on my dead body!"

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ROAD TO ULSTER

OWING to a recent outrage, curfew at Tullamore was at 9 p.m. Up to within a few minutes of this hour the streets were full of people taking the air. When, however, two lines of Black and Tans appeared advancing concentrically along the principal streets with rifles at the trail, everybody fled homeward. Only here and there impudent young women defied the majesty and might of the Crown up to and even beyond the last moment, answering stern admonitions to "get home in quick time" with laughter and sallies of wit. That it was not altogether a laughing matter, however, the sharp "crack" of a rifle presently attested.

On Monday, May 2nd, I took train to Clara, and thence resumed the road to Mullingar. This twenty-two mile walk was uneventful ex-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

cept for losing the way and straying into the Kilbeggan district.

A succession of long, narrow, and very lonely lanes brought me once again onto the main road near Castletown.

There were occasional distractions. Two boys raced me for a couple of miles in a donkey-cart, their handicap being an ass that had made up its mind to proceed in the opposite direction, mine increasingly sore and painful feet. The attitude of such people as I did meet was sometimes shy and suspicious, more often friendly—never actually hostile. At a wineshop-cum-grocer's at Horseleap they furnished bread, butter, and jam, and would accept payment only for a drink of ale. A little farther on I came upon a lonely cottage evidently inhabited, but closed and silent as the grave. Being uncertain of the way owing to an embarrassing lack of sign-posts, I knocked at the door. A faint rustling sound followed, but not until some minutes had elapsed did a woman show a scared face at the window and inquire what I wanted.



## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

"Am I on the road to Castletown, please?"

She appeared at the door, holding by the hand a very small boy.

"We don't see many strangers here," she explained. "And I'm all alone."

The singular absence of life throughout this tract of country, and indeed throughout all the country districts of Ireland, was very striking. The regulations restricting the use of motor-cars were, of course, mainly responsible for this, the only motor-vehicles encountered being bakers' and provision vans and an occasional Government or County Council hauling-tractor. The country itself was wild and steeply undulating. There were occasional crops of barley and oats, but the landscape consisted, for the most part, of pasture grazed by cows and geese. When the sun came out between showers, gorse, commons, bog, stone walls, patches of bracken, hillsides tangled with growth of furze, fir, and rowan, larch-woods and spring-fed streams, melted in a glorious confusion of haphazard colour, yellows, blues, greens, browns, and deepest indigo of distance,

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

offering an impression of extraordinary confusion and charm.

At Mullingar the May cattle fair had just ended, and the beasts were being driven away by their ragged herds; only a few lean red bullocks stood in the centre of the main street until such time as their keepers should finish regaling themselves in the public-houses. That drink flowed pretty freely on these occasions was announced to all-comers by a gentleman in rags who stood throughout the whole of one day on the curb of the pavement, alternately shouting, singing at the top of his voice, and remonstrating with himself for his conduct. To watch him in his happiness was a joy in itself. Whenever a grown-up lady passed he bowed with extreme deference; but if it was a young girl he winked, a roguish look came into his eye, he sniggered. Any friend who passed he invited to join him in a glass; and if nobody passed he shouted to the world at large that it was glorious to be drunk, that it was ecstasy—or words to this effect. . . .

## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

Mullingar, politically, is one of the quietest towns in Ireland.

I learnt this from John P. Hayden, twenty-one years Nationalist Member of Parliament for South Roscommon, a leading resident of the town. An acute and nowadays dispassionate observer of current politics, Mr. Hayden was in some ways better able to estimate the aspirations and ambitions of his countrymen at Mullingar than had been William O'Brien at Mallow.

He spoke at any rate with the calm deliberation of a man who looks back upon the past with regret but without rancour. His point of view disclosed itself in the very first sentence of a long conversation.

"If I did not think the Irish people would be satisfied to-day with self-government within the Empire my whole life would be a lie."

I asked him kindly to diagnose the present state of the country.

"There can be no doubt Ireland is behind the Sinn Fein movement," was his reply, "though

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

five years ago the names of Eamon de Valera, Arthur Griffith, and Michael Collins were unknown, even to Irishmen. Nevertheless, I regard this as one of the most tragic periods in our history. It has been a history—of mistakes. The roots of Irish discontent never really lay in poverty but in a desire for freedom—that is the mistake England made. Nationalism linked the Land Question with the National Question—the people to become owners. That is the mistake we made.”

It was natural, perhaps that we should dwell on the past.

“Lecky’s ‘History of Ireland’ has made many a rebel. You say ‘Ireland is slow to forget,’ but our wrongs are not righted, so we haven’t a chance to forget. Half a century of constitutional agitation for Home Rule has failed to obtain it. The General Elections of ’74, ’85, ’86, ’92, ’10, and ’18—all gave a clear Irish verdict for Home Rule, a verdict which has been endorsed by our own and foreign peoples in other lands. Isaac Butt called a Conference of Protestants and landowners, and

## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

defined Home Rule. Parnell kept down the physical force element and insisted on Constitutional methods. The present physical movement is purely patriotic and largely results from a conviction of treachery."

"What actually brought about the sudden change?"

"The bitterness of repeated disappointments and the formation of the Ulster Volunteers by Carson—one of the greatest enemies of his country, let me say. It was Carson's men who set the example of raising an armed force. Sinn Fein was delighted at the opportunity of following suit, and at one Sinn Fein meeting three cheers were given for the Ulster leader! 'If they, why not we?' was the cry. 'Physical force to meet physical force!' The difference is that Carson professed loyalty and prepared rebellion, while we declared ourselves rebels and took the risk. Ireland was furious at Carson being made Attorney-General. The most prominent abettors of drilling and importing arms were on the Bench!"

"Who do you consider to have been the best

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Chief Secretary since the beginning of the century?"

"Birrell. Birrell was the only Chief Secretary we've ever had who didn't think he had a right to be here. He set to work to be the last of his tribe, and he very nearly succeeded."

"And Balfour?"

"Balfour's administration resembled Greenwood's. But Balfour was respected."

"Do you think anti-English propaganda in the schools has had much to do with the present state of affairs?"

"Not in my experience. It certainly did not in my day."

"Or Bolshevism—so-called?"

"Not with Sinn Fein. It may have supported the Irish Labour Party. Sinn Fein and Labour work hand-in-hand towards a separate ideal."

"Or religious differences?"

"There are no religious differences in the Midlands and South. Sir Hamar Greenwood's statement to the effect that 'the minor-

## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

ity have been shot in Ireland because they are Protestants is absolutely scandalous.”

“The country is exceptionally prosperous at the present time?”

“People are better off than before the war, but enterprise is stopped and labour dearer than two years ago. The minimum wage for agricultural labourers has just been raised to £2 a week.” \*

“What is your opinion of the present Administration?”

“Nobody trusts Lloyd George. Politically he is not straight. As for Greenwood, he’s—preposterous.”

“And the Government of Ireland Act?”

“No good in its present form. The Southern Irish see in it two things: (1) Partition;

\* This was the actual rate in May, 1921, which has since been raised to 45s. a week in Westmeath, with a demand pending for 50s. At a meeting of the Agricultural Wages Board held in Dublin on May 4th, 1921, an order was made fixing the minimum rates of wages for male workers over 20 years of age at 34s. in Group I., and 32s. in Group II., the inclusive rate for cowmen, cattlemen, yardmen, and full-time herds to be 37s. 6d. in Group I., and 35s. 6d. in Group II. The maximum values to be placed on board and lodgings in the case of adult male workers was fixed at 16s. 6d. and 14s. 6d. respectively in both groups.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

(2) Plunder. It divides the country on sectarian lines and imposes a huge tribute on us. Ireland, mind you, has to pay for all services, some of which she will not control herself, plus eighteen millions of money. If you say that we ought to pay our share of the Imperial War Debt, as Canada and Australia are doing, my answer is that the choice of war or peace was not left to us but it was to them. Then, is it fair that six counties should have the same representation as twenty-six, as in the Council for all Ireland? Another extraordinary thing about the Act is that there should be a Senate in each Parliament nominated by the Crown in the case of the South and elected by the dominant party in the case of the North?"

"You condemn the Government's present policy?"

"The Black and Tan business has sunk deep already into the national mind. But Irishmen forget quickly if they are allowed to, and, given a generous settlement, the whole wretched affair would probably soon be forgotten."



## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

"The Irish have a curious knack, though, of forgetting and remembering again a century or two later?"

"Only if recollection is forced upon them; only if their wrongs are constantly rising up and hitting them in the face. The Irish do not dislike the English so much as the English governing classes who have wrought all the mischief. But we hold the English people responsible for the present disastrous policy."

"What do you consider the shortest way to peace?"

"A lot might be accomplished by the leaders coming together. You never find t'other fellow so bad as you imagine him. Create an *atmosphere* by a real offer."

"Is a man like Lord Derby welcome as a mediator?"

"Lord Derby is a good man. You can trust him."

"And what would you call a 'real offer'?"

"A definite offer of Dominion Home Rule should be made by the British Government and it would probably be accepted, though this is

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

less likely than would have been the case four years ago."

"And Ulster?"

"It may still be possible to bring Ulster into a Dublin Parliament. It could have been done at the close of the Convention early in 1918. The Ulster representatives might then have brought the North into the settlement by saying, 'We must give way. This thing is forced on us. We'll make the best of Home Rule.' But the eighteen Ulster members were only delegates, not plenipotentiaries, and had to carry all questions for decision to their leaders, who were outside the spirit and 'atmosphere' of the Conference."

"In your opinion the demand for an independent Republic is not final, then?"

"Ireland would be content to remain within the British Empire if given a generous measure of self-government analogous to Dominion Home Rule."

There seemed no special purpose to be served by tramping through the grazing lands of

## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

Meath to Navan and Athboy, where I was informed people in the thinly-populated districts only want to settle down under a measure of Home Rule. My feet, moreover, were in a parlous state owing to the extreme dryness of the roads and the longish distances covered without much opportunity of hardening them.

I thus, on May 3rd, took train for the North-east, being entertained throughout the journey by one of those merry old Irishmen who *per se* proclaim "Ireland a nation."

All the way he talked, laughed, and sang songs, telling one anecdote after another, telling of how he used to play the cornet in the local band, and of how his father had informed him (early) that "he'd a voice like a crow or a bridge falling."

He related, too, with ardour the story of the intoxicated man from Portadown who found himself in a railway-carriage with a priest.

"To Hell with the Pope!" shouted the Ulsterman at the top of his voice.

The priest looked shocked.

"Why do you say that, my good man?" he

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

gently remonstrated. "Do you know His Holiness, because I can assure you he is a very nice, kindly old gentleman, who never did anybody any harm."

"Well, he's got a damned bad name in Portadown!" was the reply.

"That's your narrow-minded Northern bigots!" cried my companion, roaring at his own joke, "the men you're going to meet."

He presently opened a Dublin paper and became serious.

"Ah! John Traynor—they've hanged him." He took off his hat. "He's joined the souls of those who've died for Ireland."

\* \* \* \* \*

Dundalk in Co. Louth is a dirty red-and-white town with a considerable tanning and leather industry. It is also a hotbed of Sinn Féin. And it was here I joined the high road from Dublin to Belfast.

I stayed one night. There could be no doubt that the town was at this time what is uncomfortably called in Ireland "waking up," which

## THE ROAD TO ULSTER

meant that agents of the I.R.A. had made their appearance in the locality. Their attentions so far had been confined mainly to inflicting punishment for infringements of the boycott. Only a day or two before rolls of Belfast cloth had been taken out of a shop and burned in the main street. There had also been a raid on a bank, and one or two attacks on police barracks. In the ten miles to Newry, I found that over four of them the telegraph wires had been systematically cut; and where the beechwoods fall steep to the road at Ravensdale a bridge had been damaged and the road holed. A fine sporting country, this East Louth, with its gay streams alive with trout, its great woodlands teeming with wild pheasants, its stony, heathery mountains, the worst walking in the world, where a man may climb and stumble all day long and be alone with the crow of the cock grouse, the swoop of the peregrine-falcon, and the swift-falling mists. A paradise of wild life, for the blue hare and the deer are found high on the mountain, herons and kingfishers haunt the lower

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

streams, the hillsides swarm with rabbits, and when early winter comes the woodcock comes, too, to every mossy wood and copse. Nor is that all. Carlingford way, among the mountains, you have vast stretches of snipe-bog and reedy pools where gulls and wild duck nest; stretches of marsh and sand, the home of waders innumerable, extend to the verges of the sea. . . .

I came to Newry late in a stormy afternoon. Rain swept up at dusk and, driving over the grey rooftops, lashed the mountain-tops of Mourne. The Black and Tans were more than usually active after curfew—there had been trouble out towards Carlingford—and every few minutes the big Crossley cars with their dark green freights rushed past, firing occasional shots as they went.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE GATES OF ULSTER

**N**EWRY is the gate of Ulster. . . .

In a garden an old man paced slowly up and down, up and down, rain or fine, like the ghostly lovers in Thomas Hardy's poem. He was, they informed me, father of sons who last week had taken part in a bombing-attack on the police in the main street and now lay in Belfast Prison awaiting trial. That was not all. Revolvers found in the father's house had drawn prosecution and a fine on himself for their delinquencies.

It was Sunday, and numbers of men stood about the ugly streets with nothing to do. That the political complexion of the town was almost exactly half-and-half, with a slight Sinn Fein preponderance, was to be expected; that more than half the population was unemployed, less so. One of a group of men standing on

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

the quay informed me that only one flax-factory was working, that there was no demand for linen, and that no ships were entering or leaving the port, with the exception of the Liverpool steamer. Half the male population was living on its unemployment dole.

I entered the Roman Catholic Cathedral and found it crowded. Walking down the street, the old scowls met you at one corner, but before you had reached the next a young man of whom you had asked the way came up and entered into conversation apparently out of sheer partiality for English society. What did I think of curfew at nine? Wasn't it a shame, but it didn't affect him, for he lived at Cam-lough just outside the curfew area, etc. . . .

That evening I talked over dinner with a Dublin Castle official employed on local business, who gave a not uninteresting summary of the last seven years in Ireland. The failure of the 1914 Home Rule Act (he said) was the direct cause of the 1916 Rebellion. Up till about the spring of 1915 there was real enthusiasm for the war in Ireland, men were ready



## THE GATES OF ULSTER

to join in thousands. He mentioned a review of National Volunteers before Mr. Redmond held in Phoenix Park late in 1914 at which twenty thousand men had paraded, ready and able to defend their native shores. From the first, however, the War Office, acting on the principle, "We don't want too many Irish troops," mishandled and discouraged popular feeling. Then the people began to realise they had been duped, or thought they had, over the Act, and that reaction set in which rose to a crescendo in the Rebellion.

Lord French came to Ireland on May 6th, 1918, with a policy of reconstruction. He came also to fight the anti-Conscription League, which in spite of him triumphed.

The first murder took place on January 21st, 1919 (the anniversary, curiously enough, of the murders of Burke and Lord Frederick Cavendish), when two policemen, McDonnell and O'Connell, were killed at Solloghobeg, Co. Tipperary, while escorting a load of explosives for blasting purposes. There had previously been a campaign of intimidation by

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Sinn Fein, followed by a crop of R.I.C. resignations.

"It was about this time," my acquaintance said, "or a little earlier that I heard de Valera speak in East Clare. There was wild enthusiasm at first, but as a speaker he was curiously unimpressive. Within ten minutes the meeting was half-empty."

Reviewing Ireland's long line of Chief Secretaries since he had been at the Castle, he gave it as his opinion that Mr. Balfour was the only one who could have handled the present situation with any prospect of success.

I questioned him as to the future of Ulster.

"The Northern Parliament will go on functioning, but it will not be able to do so successfully without the Southern. The boycott will become a very serious matter for Belfast. Eventually, in my belief, a bargain will have to be struck whereby the North will enter a National Parliament under safeguards. That is the only way to peace."

Next morning I set out upon the last stage of the road to Belfast. The thirteen miles to

## THE GATES OF ULSTER

Banbridge are signally dull. The road, flat or undulating, leads through grass fields divided by stone walls, with occasional heaths and commons. The villages are whitewashed or of grey stone, a little more substantial perhaps than the villages farther South: there were fewer, at any rate, of those melancholy, broken-down cottages which are there so frequently seen. I passed through two villages and by a little reed-engirdled lake, lively with the flights and cries of moorhens, and of nesting wild duck. The mountains of Mourne were never far distant. There were no obstacles on this road, no tree-trunks, holes or trenches; there was indeed no traffic except a couple of motor-cars, one or two traps, and three or four bicyclists during the whole journey.

And the complexion of the people changed. A squarer, sturdier, fairer race populated the villages. The dark eyes and hair, the swarthy complexion, the striking beauty and features of the Southern peasants seemed to give way to a ruddier complexion, blue eyes, flaxen hair. The manner and the accent changed north of

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Newry, taking on a certain brusqueness and directness; a lingering on the r's was noticeable that had more of Glasgow in it than of Dublin. Yes, the human type was definitely different.

And to leave Newry by the northward way was to cast another look back into the turbid history of the last eight years. There is a five-acre field on the outskirts of the town—used, I think, as a sports' ground—where assembled one September day of 1913 a great concourse of Ulstermen. Bands were playing, and on one side of the ground a large wooden stand was filled with the chief men and women of Co. Down. Before this stand thousands of Volunteers were drawn up. Now their leader arrived, and the whole assembly broke into great cheering; there is a glimpse of Sir Edward Carson lying back rather wearily in a motor-car, acknowledging the salutations with a wave of the hand. F. E. Smith one can recall very distinctly — leaning forward, curiously youthful in appearance, beating out his points on the rostrum in front of him. Captain James

## THE GATES OF ULSTER

Craig is less vivid, but seeing him at Holywood again one recaptures an impression of impregnable stolidity. The old Lord Londonderry was there, his powerful wife, the old Lord Kilmorey, the Duke of Abercorn, and many others. In the golden September sunshine, amid the half-circle of mountains, the Ulster Volunteers marching past their political chiefs made a brave effect. At the close a solemn shout was raised for the pledge of the Covenant which should bind all Irish Unionists together. . . .

Ironic echoes answer but—history draws a veil over the years between.

If Newry is the gate of Ulster, Banbridge is quite definitely Ulster. It is an outpost of Belfast.

The principal industry of Banbridge is linen. Here, and hereabouts, is grown the finest flax in the world; here, too, it is bleached, woven into linen, and despatched to Belfast.

Before the war, the largest quantity of flax was exported to Germany. Owing, however, to depression in the industry caused by lack of

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

raw material, high prices on account of high wages, and consequently reduced demand, numbers of hands, as at Newry, were out of work. Two thousand five hundred were reported to be living on unemployment pay within a radius of twenty miles.

Within a radius of three miles, fifty or sixty families had emigrated in as many months, the reason given being general depression, unemployment, and the uncertainty of the future.

I took a walk round the town, the neighbourhood of which is ugly and flat. A crowd stood on the bridge that spans the curious steep dip in the centre of the main street. A young man was holding forth on the subject of his soul's salvation.

The best commentary on this piece of egotism seemed to be a burnt-out house which gapes on the main street, and down a side-street two more. These are the work of the Protestant population of Banbridge who, last July year, wreaked their vengeance on Sinn Fein after the murder of a native of the town, Constabulary-Captain Smith, in Cork city.

## THE GATES OF ULSTER

One who took part in the affair said:

"I was on the fire-brigade the first night and worked hard. But when somebody cut the hose I chucked it. Next night we burnt the rest."

It was easy to make friends in Banbridge. Slowly at first, and then with a dawning and pleasant consciousness, the friendliness of the place imposed itself upon one. An Englishman feels he is liked there, trusted, welcomed.

Two friends in especial I made—partners in a motor business. These hospitable gentlemen entertained me at the back of their shop, and after dark insisted on running the police gauntlet to a nearby public house, where they procured a bottle of whisky.

In a small store-room or office, lit by a candle and surrounded by spare tyres, tins of oil, and patent valve-lifters, we talked far into the small hours. What politicians they were! Ardent, angry, determined but not bigoted. The cleverer one, a sandy-haired freckly fellow, said:

"We won't go under any Dublin Parliament.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

What they want is our money. It's all very well to talk about safeguards now, but this is a question that involves our whole future. Once give our freedom over to Catholics and we shall not get it back. The thing's impossible. We never wanted the present Act, but, rebels and murderers as they are, we'll meet them on the Council of Ireland, and when they show they know how to behave themselves, perhaps we'll think it over."

Again, said he:

"Our economic relations, you must remember, are absolutely bound up with England. You are our market for cattle, tobacco, and to a certain extent linen. We get from you motor-cars, agricultural machinery, and most of the necessities. For us there's no other suitable market."

"What about the boycott?"

"That hits the big Belfast wholesale firms, no doubt, but not the main industries of Ulster, which are export. Very little, bar imported stuff, goes South."



## THE GATES OF ULSTER

The other fellow's contribution—a fine, sturdy type of Ulsterman—was:

“Craig's a great man. In some ways he's a better man for us at the present moment than Carson. He was born among us, you see, and he's always lived here. He's more in touch perhaps with the practical occupations and aspirations of the people. Carson, after all, is a Galway man. We absolutely trust Craig, and if he decides it's O.K. to meet the Republicans—well, it is.”

“Politics are the curse of Ulster,” commented his friend, throwing away a cigarette-end. “We talk, talk, talk politics morning, noon, and night. But if necessary we'll fight.”

## CHAPTER XV

### BELFAST

**I**T was evening. . . .

The Lough lay glooming in an uncertain light. One or two yachts and small fishing-smacks rode upon grey waters. The Liverpool steamer made her way seawards on the ebb-tide. Over yonder the hills of Antrim frowned rainfully across the smoke of Belfast.

There is a promenade between the railway line and the shores of the lough at Holywood. Here, on the evening of Friday, May 6th, young couples strolled, inhaling the salt and seaweed air. A little inland, on low, wooded hills, white, substantial villas peeped through the foliage of gardens.

Leaving the station, I found an avenue of chestnuts leading up to the little suburb itself. Half-way along this, on the left-hand side, a

## BELFAST

small crowd stood outside a building of the plain, sensible sort so liberally affected by Belfast. There was cheering, and a motor-car was approaching at a foot's pace, accompanied by an enthusiastic throng. The car stopped. There was another outburst of cheering; from the car stepped a broad, thick-set man with an expansive, good-humoured face. It was Sir James Craig.

He shook a policeman's hand with a grip so hearty as to make the worthy fellow wince. Followed by Lady Craig, he entered the Hall.

It was packed. It was packed with men and women in almost equal proportions, who rose on the Ulster leader's entry. When you scrutinised them individually, you perceived an English audience or a Scotch one. One thing it had not the appearance of—an Irish audience.

William of Orange looked down. William of Orange on a white charger stared indomitably from his vantage-point over the battlefield of the Boyne. In other guises he looked at you from the Orangemen's banners. He was green, he was framed in scarlet, he was pointing, he

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

was glancing proudly; he was always proud, majestic—victorious.

They took their seats upon the platform — Sir James a little in front beside the Chairman, the speakers and the candidates flanking him. Behind, ladies sat, ladies whose faces betrayed the excitement of an election meeting. That meeting began not with a speech, but with the singing of “For he’s a jolly good fellow”—an incomplete version of this popular refrain, but enough to do justice to the occasion. The Chairman then suggested that the Ulster hymn, “O God Our Help in Ages Past,” should be sung. It was sung, and the iron ring in its lusty rendering seemed to carry no memories across a gulf of seven years.

Sir James Craig rose. Outside, said he, there would be an overflow meeting; and he bade young Captain Mulholland—Cambridge University cricketer and candidate for the Holywood division—go keep it quiet. Young Captain Mulholland clicked his heels, saluted, and turned about.

If Sir James had a text, it was this: “You

## BELFAST

have done me the honour to elect me as your leader, and"—raising his voice—"I *mean to lead.*"

That was the dominant note.

He also said this:

"The British Government will let us down to-morrow if they can get the smallest benefit out of it."

That was Ulster's point of contact with the South.

He next went on to describe the circumstances antecedent to his meeting with Eamon de Valera, which had taken place two days before. For this moment alone the speech had been curiously awaited. After the manner of political leaders, he proceeded to say a great deal on the subject of this event—and to tell nothing.

Lord Fitzalan had just come to Dublin. And on this event the Ulster leader vouchsafed two or three not insignificant sentences:

"The status of the new Lord Lieutenant is completely changed. He will keep outside politics. It will be more on a par with that of Lieutenant-Governor of

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

a Crown Colony. He will simply be the King's representative."

But what was said after Sir James Craig had left the meeting was of greater significance than anything that fell from his own lips.

There was an elderly white-bearded candidate, Mr. McBride. His mode of address is not uncharacteristic of Belfast:

"We want no more meetings with de Valera, and we'll have none. If I know the people of Ulster, they will never consent to come in contact with men like de Valera."

Tom Lavery, a Labour candidate, got up.

"I'm Tom," he said, "of County Down, not Dan of Ballykinlar." That provoked laughter.

There was none when he said, "We cannot go further at present with the assassins and murderers of the loyal people of Ireland."

It was a wet night in East Belfast. And under the rain a great industrial city is a dreary place. Everybody was glad to squeeze into the Orange Hall, where two of the candidates were going to address the electors.

## BELFAST

Captain Herbert Dixon, M.P., spoke first. He is an alert, youngish man, with a well-brushed business type of mind. Sir Dawson Bates, secretary of the Irish Unionist Alliance, followed — a downright hard-headed zealot, with a clear-cut horizon and no sentiment to spare.

I sat in a corner, but it was near the platform, but while the two Northerners spoke, my mind was occupied with — Barry Egan and Liamon de Roiste. An “incisiveness” of outlook might join Egan with Dixon; they would watch each other, they would fence. If it came to business, Dixon’s mind might win the day; if to political negotiation, he would barely hold his own; if to “intellect” — on the whole, Egan.

Bates and de Roiste are extremes, totally at variance. Sir Dawson has no words to spare — no “moments outside business.” He speaks and looks and thinks and is — Belfast. In de Roiste there are reserves — of irony, intelligence, fertility. De Roiste is an unsounded quantity.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Nor can the mind at once adjust itself to Ulster.

"We don't want a United Ireland, we want a United Kingdom."

To one from the South that was—frankly—a bombshell. Perhaps it ought not to have been. But it was.

And the phrase was applauded; it was roared at.

I noted other points in the speeches which provoked clappings and "Hear, hear!"

"Some people hope that Ulster is going to make a mess of things. *Failure means handing our bodies and souls over to Sinn Fein and the Roman Catholic Church.*"

"We've had enough Dublin in the past. If we can crush Sinn Fein at the forthcoming elections, there's a bright future for Ulster."

"If murder, outrage, and the killing of Protestants——"

The speaker did not reach the end of this sentence; he quoted instead from a despatch to the *Morning Post*:



## BELFAST

“There is going on to-day a St. Bartholomew of Protestants in the County of Cork. These enemies of ‘reformed religion’ are being slaughtered.”

A lady spoke. She advocated kitchen-meetings of ten or twelve women. “Get together,” she advised, “and talk over things. You know what is wanted in Belfast. A large number of our school-houses are not fit to house pigs in. It’s no fault of ours that our children are taught sedition.”

An ex-soldier spoke:

“Ex-soldiers, will you get fair treatment from the party that said you were traitors to your country? . . . If you go to villages in the South and West, you find miserable hovels and among them magnificent chapels — the homes of the priests, but paid for by the people.”

The meeting closed on the chairman’s note:

“We’re not tired of the good old Union

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Jack. Let's keep that flag flying over the North of Ireland!"

"Free-man! Free man! Early sixth! Early sixth!"

The newsboys shouted, the trams clanked, the bells clanged. Was there ever such a place for trams? Crowds ambulating along High Street, shopping crowds and business crowds colliding all day long at the junction of Royal Avenue and Donegal Place—the pivot of Belfast.

And at night—what a crush at the junction! "Antrim Road—Shankhill Road—Falls Road—Belmont." On the stroke of ten-thirty—silence. . . .

I took a tram to the Falls Road terminus. Row upon row of newish brick tenement-houses, of squalid shops, picture palaces innumerable, youths playing football in waste spaces, and near the end of the long road a small, quiet park overlooked by Squire's Mountain. A feature of the journey was the names above the shops—Murphy, Ryan, Connor,

## BELFAST

Mahoney, Keogh, Molloy. And they, in turn, accounted for inscriptions on blank walls such as: "Up Dublin! Your hour is come! Beware! Shoot on sight! Up the rebels!"

If Belfast's characteristic sound is the clangour of the tramcar bells, her characteristic hour is 5.30 p.m. Then the shipyard and factory sirens hoot across the city. The shipyard workers crowd out of the docks until Waring Street and High Street are blocked with them. A similar scene may be witnessed near the gates of the West India Docks, London—crowds of brawny men with grimy faces in caps and blue overalls and shirts without collars, carrying small wicker baskets. In Belfast you have the spectacle of special trams labelled "Workers only," crowded from roof to floor and passing in procession at this hour down High Street.

Enter the docks. And what a contrast when you think of the Belfast of 1913! True, the riveting hammers still beat out their lively tune, and at Harland & Wolff's you find the skeleton of a liner in the hands of a small army.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

But opposite is the limbless trunk of a half-built vessel which has long been lying on the stocks. That, indeed, is the piano key of a great port which has more shipping than freight, which has not the money to complete what it has begun.

A submarine re-fitting lies along Donegal Quay; just below the Fleetwood berth a Scandinavian cargo-boat is newly in with timber. Walking the length of an endless row of warehouses and sheds, you find half a dozen men shovelling a few hundred-weight of condemned grain into sacks. You see ships rusted, ships apparently forgotten, ships to be sold, ships without a buyer, ships that it does not pay to repair. You see—stagnancy.

All Belfast was talking of the Craig-de Valera meeting, girding itself with an illusive expectancy, girding sometimes at its own leader, sometimes at the other leader, tending to lose sight of the major question in the momentary issue. The first thing I asked the

## BELFAST

Finance Minister-Designate when he received me, was:

"Is there any prospect of Ulster accepting or devising such guarantees or safeguards as may bring her into a Dublin Parliament?"

Mr. Pollock's energetic answer was:

"Why should we go to Dublin? Why should we, law-abiding citizens, associate with these people who murder and outrage?"

I have seldom met a more uncompromising man. I have seldom met a man whose demeanour expressed such inflexibility, such determination. With a face strong to the point of fierceness, with a dark beard and forward chin, bushy eyebrows and stern eyes, the Northern Government's first Finance Minister can hardly be described as concessionable.

"Can you suggest steps to peace?"

"The present Act of Parliament is the only form of Home Rule acceptable to us. We never asked for the Government of Ireland Act, but in my opinion it's a good Act, and we mean loyally to work it, whatever happens.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

In doing that we're only carrying out the law."

"Does it make for the ultimate unity of the country, in your opinion?"

"Through the Council of Ireland, yes. North and South would be brought into constant contact, and the possibilities of ultimate union are on the whole great."

Mr. Pollock leant back in his office chair with his thumbs hooked in the sleeve-holes of his waistcoat, and stared thoughtfully in front of him.

"English people are stupid," he said bluntly. "Why can't they see that Ulster is the only bulwark between them and complete dissolution of the British Empire? Once concede independence to Ireland, and you'll have Egypt, South Africa, India claiming it too."

"Can you visualize any concession in the direction of Dominion Home Rule — fiscal autonomy, for instance?"

"On the subject of concessions Ulster is adamant. We must have free trade with Great Britain. We prefer to remain part of a

## BELFAST

big country in a free Customs Union. Why, the first thing a Dublin Parliament might do would be to impose duties on English imported goods. England would retaliate—you've only got to read history: how, for instance, England ruined the Irish wool trade in the seventeenth century. Well, we don't want any of these Customs barriers. We are practical people here. These Southerners are full of sentimental ideas about nationality."

"What about the boycott?"

"It does not hit Ulster very hard. Our business with the South is only a distributing trade, circulating English imported goods. Ulster-manufactured tobacco goes to England, very little to the South, linen mostly to the United States, cattle to England."

"Feeling down South is, as you know, intense on the subject of the Catholic workers in the shipyards."

"Yes, but the religious question here is really more apparent than real. The trouble in the shipyards arose from the attitude of the Sinn

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Fein element imported from the South during the war, when labour was short. When the violence campaign began they took up an aggressive attitude towards their fellow-workmen. They also stood in the way of the ex-soldiers returned to their old jobs. The murder of District-Inspector Swanzy at Lisburn actually lit the match. Before the I.R.A. campaign began Catholics and Protestants were working happily together, as they are now in other trades. Many thousand Catholics are still employed by Unionist firms, Catholics are still employed in the dockyards. The Nationalists, you must remember, have chased Protestants out of the Derry shipyards. But here the hostility is to Sinn Fein rather than to Catholics as such."

"Does religion play any part in education here?"

"The Roman Catholic Church offers no public education. We want popular education."

"There's a good deal of unemployment in Belfast, isn't there?"



## BELFAST

"There is.\* The causes are:

"(1) The difficulty of obtaining raw materials. Before the war seventy-five per cent. of our flax of the coarser sort was imported from Russia, the finer sorts from Holland and Belgium. Irish-grown flax made up the remainder. Canada now supplies some. Consequently the cost has gone up and the demand has diminished.

"(2) Ship-owners are cancelling orders. Shipbuilders are delaying work, and proposing to reduce wages by six shillings a week. Ships lie half-finished because it doesn't pay to build them. As a result men are thrown out of employment."

"On the whole, you see very little hope of a settlement through the 'Partition Act'?"

"'Partition' is a political catch-phrase. The fact is we cannot rely upon safeguards offered by rebels and murderers." The words that followed were almost identical with those used

\* Ministry of Labour statistics of unemployed in Ireland showed: Belfast, 28,434; Dublin, 16,291; Cork, 10,922; Limerick, 4,188; Derry, 4,176; Waterford, 2,264. Of the total for Ireland, 79,046 are men, 1,809 women, 2,585 boys, 2,845 girls.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

by my friends in Banbridge: "When they've shown they know how to behave themselves, then—perhaps in two or three years' time—we'll talk it over with them."

One morning I called at a Roman Catholic college in North Belfast.

In a very small, very bare room I talked with a youngish, rather shy-mannered priest who introduced himself as the President. From him came an echo of the South, only with an added, a keener note of resentment.

"The Protestants here are bigots. We're living in a prison. If I walk down the street the children spit at sight of me. Our letters are censored and our telephone tapped."

The first question that occurred to me was as to the schools and the alleged anti-English propaganda in the Roman Catholic colleges.

"There is some anti-English—if you like the phrase—education, because we teach the history of Ireland," was the reply. "For instance, I take every opportunity of knocking down your English 'heroes,' men like Clive and Nel-

## BELFAST

son, and the story that Burke was cruel to Warren Hastings! For the rest, the Protestants must build schools for themselves if they don't want their children to be 'contaminated.' At any rate, their children ought to be put to school in their own parish or district where they are known, instead of being sent, as they are, broadcast about the city."

I chanced to mention the burnt houses at Lisburn.

"They were the homes of friends of mine, prosperous farmers," the priest said. "I often visited there. They lived their own life and kept to themselves—had to, indeed. So when the Roman Catholic shipyard workers were turned out of the docks the Protestants came and burnt them out. Oh! it's this so-called 'religion,' not 'loyalty to the Empire,' that's at the back of it all."

"How far do you think the boycott is affecting Belfast?"

"To this extent: two-thirds of the distributing trade in Ireland was done by Belfast, and Belfast merchants travelled all over the coun-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

try. Only the remaining one-third was handled by the South. Where ten thousand pounds a week was earned by the wholesale houses before, a hundred pounds is turned over now."

"What's to be the end of it all?"

"A Republic is the only solution. We can't trust the British Government. They've played us false over and over again. You see, we are idealists—in Ulster they are 'practical men.' "

I stopped at the Nationalist Club on my way to see a "high Government official." Here Mr. Joe Devlin, surrounded by friends, was discussing his Election Address, whilst imbibing a whisky-and-soda.

He told two stories (one of which I cannot remember) and launched into a diatribe against the Government:

"There was a man charged with blasphemy—cursing the Pope. He stoutly denied the charge in the witness-box. Then his mother was called to give evidence.

" 'And did he call the Pope a damned old swindler, now?'

## BELFAST

“‘Ach, sure, and he did not. Mike never was a religious man. He couldn’t have said it!’

“Ulster only thinks of Ulster,” was the burden of the Nationalist dreadnought’s discourse—or harangue.

“But the boycott is a bad business for Belfast. As to the Government, I’m fed up with them. They’ve done nothing but turn, twist, shilly-shally. A settlement could probably be arrived at on Dominion Home Rule lines, but Lloyd George ought to come out straight with what he’s prepared to offer in the House of Commons.”

And with that the redoubtable “Joe” shut up, deftly turning the conversation to such subjects as the late Tom Kettle and the wickedness of the coal strike and the awkwardness of the boat-sailings.

The “high official,” when I ran him to earth, proved to be a model of his kind. That is to say, he talked a great deal and told very little.”

“But,” said he, “you can take it from one

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

who is 'inside things'—the war is nearly over. The I.R.A. are getting sick of it."

Four months passed before his prophecy was fulfilled. . . .

I inquired whether—as events appeared to indicate at the time—Republican activities were not trending North and East. Two constables had been shot dead in Donegal Place during the previous week, while on the previous day a police-inspector had been dangerously wounded in the Falls Road district.

"The Police-Inspectorship of Falls Road is, I should say, the most dangerous position in the whole of Ireland. These 'gunmen' do not wear uniform, and in a great city like Belfast outrages are only possible because of the freedom citizens enjoy."

I questioned him as to the effect of the boycott.

"The boycott, you must remember, cannot touch the three main industries of Ulster—linen, not one per cent. of which goes to the South, shipbuilding, and agriculture. The big

## BELFAST

manufacturing firms are, in my opinion, not very much affected; the small manufacturers and distributors are."

"Has Belfast any retaliatory weapon—an embargo, for instance, on the export of South-country cattle or perishable goods?"

"No. But one thing not generally realised is that more potatoes are grown in Down and Antrim than in any other counties in Ireland."

"On what terms, if any, do you think Ulster would enter a Dublin Parliament?"

"There would have to be at least a one-fourth representation. Compare the distribution of population—and of wealth. Outside Ulster you have 327,000 Protestants living in a population of 2,812,000 Roman Catholics; in the Six Counties 430,000 Roman Catholics living amid 820,000 Protestants. Roughly, you have three Catholics to one Protestant if you take the whole of Ireland."

"Can you suggest no adequate safeguards, then?"

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

"I would not say that. But to understand the Irish question as a whole you have to realise what the prospect of living under the rule of a man like de Valera means to these people. De Valera has defined 'safeguards' as 'the safeguards of common sense.' He has also said (at Killaloe, July 5th, 1919): 'If the Unionists do not come in on our side they will have to go under.' And at Ballaghadaveen a fortnight later: 'Ulster must be coerced if she stands in the way.' These are the man's real sentiments."

"Whatever you do, though," my authority urged with much earnestness, "don't do or say anything which will embitter the question or make things worse than they are."

At Queen's University is another more or less aloof observer of events — Professor Henry, author of "The Evolution of Sinn Fein."

His views chiefly concerned the future.

"The Southern Parliament will not function. In the long run, the Northern Parliament will fail because:



## BELFAST

“(1) The area delimited under the Act is too small. One and a quarter millions of people cannot form practically a separate State with any prospect of success.

“(2) The expense of administration will prove ruinous.

“(3) There is a total ignorance of practical administration in the new Government.

“(4) There is an absolute lack of agreement on a definite domestic policy.

“In Education, for instance, there are no signs of a definite policy. Labour is dissatisfied, not knowing where it stands. Above all, this Northern Government is organisedly and avowedly anti-Catholic.

“There can be no question of a lasting settlement through the Partition Act,” he continued. “Under it, the British Government keeps everything that matters for the commercial and industrial prosperity of Ireland. The number of our members at Westminster is reduced. No common trade arrangements are possible while you have one form of Government in the North and another in the South.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

On the other hand, we have to pay eighteen millions a year to the English Exchequer, and England generously returns a small proportion of it! The root of the matter is that it is not to the interest of England to have us as a commercial rival."

"How far do you consider the boycott affects Belfast?"

"The distributing trade is almost smashed. That is the first-fruit of Partition."

"Cannot Belfast start a counter-boycott?"

"Doubtful. The only articles Ulster wants from the South are Limerick bacon and stout."

"You see no likelihood of an early and permanent settlement?"

"The further the Northern Administration commits itself the worse the eventual smash-up will be. The really important point is which side breaks down first—that will make a difference to the form the ultimate settlement takes. At the same time, I do not exclude the possibility of Ulster entering a Dublin Parliament when her incapacity for separate govern-

## BELFAST

ment is proved, and a disunited Ireland is seen to be politically impracticable."

Saturday afternoons among the Belfast workers are as often given up to political demonstrations as to games. Only the middle and upper middle classes clothe themselves in white and board the trams that take them to the cricket-grounds and tennis-courts.

And at 3 p.m. on the afternoon of May 7th, great numbers of working men might have been seen congregating in the neighbourhood of Carlisle Circus. It was the occasion of the first Elections for the Northern Parliament. At the corner of the side-street in which the procession was forming up, numbers of women, girls, and children stood. Every few minutes a brass or a drum-and-fife band marched up, and by degrees three large banners were unfurled on which were emblazoned the names of the candidates for North Belfast, together with such exhortations as:

"Vote for Union, Home and Empire! Ex-

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

soldiers, don't betray your comrades who shed their blood!"

When the procession set off along Antrim Road, it was to the strains of a rousing march and to facetious enjoinders down a column nearly a quarter of a mile in length to "Keep step—left, right, left, right!" and "March by the left there!" These men had served in the British Army, most of them in the Great War—that was evident.

Crowds, or rather clouds, of women, children, and youths accompanied the march, which encompassed the whole electoral district. Through innumerable side-streets of red-brick tenement-houses exactly and meticulously alike, with glimpses of washing and washing apparatus up alley-ways, along the Shankill Road, scene of so many fierce encounters, past gasworks, past stretches of blank brick wall, and warehouses and factories—so back to Cliften Street and Peter's Hill. There were no untoward incidents.

"Up Dublin!" chalked in yellow on a wall roused no comment. The rain, which began to

## BELFAST

fall steadily, could damp neither bands nor enthusiasm.

At the end of the march speeches were made and questions asked.

“Will the British public stand by Ulster, whose sons stood by them, or will they support Sinn Fein Ireland, which stabbed Britain in the back and has such a ghastly record of disloyalty and crime?”

Torrential cheering was the answer, and cries of “She’ll stand by us!”

Yet the sombre realities of Ireland, 1921, could not be ignored even in Belfast. The Black and Tan lorries and tenders and the vansful of soldiers careered about the streets as they had done further South—only one had grown so accustomed to them that one hardly noticed them.

It was in Belfast that I met Mr. X. of Cork, Charleville Junction, and Limerick—for the last time. He came out of the big restaurant in Donegal Place as I entered it. The same grey tweed suit, flash tie-pin, and the same defiant sneer at the world.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

After 10.30 p.m. silence fell upon Royal Avenue. It was Curfew-hour. The broad street lay empty.

It was unusual to hear a motor-car rush past, but on my last night in Belfast this happened.

“Crack—crack—crack—crack!”

We ran to the window overlooking Belfast's principal thoroughfare. Fifty yards away the car drew up with a grating of brakes and wild jazzing of wheels. The driver jumped out—ran to his back tyre. Three men tumbled out, bewildered and rather frightened. The sound of a rifle-bolt being worked and cartridges ejected broke the brief interval of silence. A military patrol, three men and a corporal in steel helmets, came up at the double.

A long altercation followed. Names, numbers and addresses were taken. At length the party were allowed to proceed, and silence fell upon Royal Avenue once more.

It was the 10th May. . . .

Again the Lough lay glooming beneath a

## BELFAST

rainy sky above the Antrim hills. But as the boat edged slowly away from Donegal Quay, the beams of the setting sun broke between Cave Hill and the cloud above it, and lit up the spires, the factory chimneys, the confused roof-tops of Belfast. Crowds stood on the quay—a party of young men was leaving for London, if not beyond. There were men, women, and children in the crowd—chiefly women. There were facetious calls, cries, waving of handkerchiefs and raising of handkerchiefs to eyes as the boat slipped farther and farther out into the main stream. And there was loud singing as between those on the quay and those on the boat and back again. . . .

The sunset kindled trams and foot-passengers on the gradually receding Queen's Bridge. Two four-oared skiffs raced past, the coxswains audibly counting the number of strokes to the minute. We glided by Harland & Wolff's, we were soon passing the submarine and the coloured funnels of the idle steamers in the docks.

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

The shouts and the singing grew fainter. Presently they came as a far-off fitful cadence across the water. The handkerchiefs continued to wave. . . .



## APPENDIX

*(Text of the Typewritten Document referred to on pages 38 and 65.)*

THESE facts must be repeated: as to "who began it."

*In 1917*, no police killed in Ireland. But Irish houses raided, 250 men and women arrested; 24 political leaders hauled out of their country without trial; meetings suppressed; men, women and children beaten; newspapers suppressed; savage sentences for "seditious" speeches, etc.; 2 civilians murdered; 5 died in prison from ill-treatment. Not one of the Government criminals brought to justice.

*In 1918*, no police killed in Ireland. But 260 private houses raided by night; 1,100 Irish men and women arrested for their Irish politics; meetings suppressed; men, women and children wounded; many of the 1,100 political prisoners maltreated in prison, one died of the

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

maltreatment; 5 civilians murdered by military; fairs and markets suppressed. No punishment or even reproach for the murderers.

The Irish in 1917-18 showed what a distinguished foreign visitor called "an almost criminal patience." They devoted themselves to preparing—by English form of law under English constitution—for the election of December, 1918, to show the English and the world, peacefully and "constitutionally," what they asked. They had their reward in worse persecution.

Therefore, in 1919, the first policeman as persecutor and spy was shot; and throughout 1919, 16, most of them in conflict with men less well armed than they.

*In* 1919, 14,000 houses were raided at night by armed soldiers and police; 335 meetings suppressed. The elected government and every national organisation declared illegal; 476 armed attacks on orderly gatherings; 260 men, women and children wounded; 959 arrests for politics; 20 more leaders deported; 35 papers suppressed; 8 civilians murdered.

## APPENDIX

*In* 1920, more arrests, deportations, raidings, lootings and wrecking of houses. Sacking of towns and murders of civilians more frequent; mills, factories, creameries wrecked in an attempt to starve the people into submission to English rule in practice against English theory.

These were the answers to the municipal elections of 1920 repeating the "constitutional demand of the people for self-determination."

*In June*, 1920, at the rural elections, 83 per cent. of the people declared for Independence. Therefore in the following 3 months 74 towns were sacked and burned, and 43 innocent men murdered by police and military. Flogging of men and boys, and torturing prisoners, and attacks on women and children became a regular part of England's military terrorism in Ireland.

It is absurd, therefore, to say that murders of police caused the policy of which they were the result. It was Gessler "began it," not Tell. (And if there have been 100 armed police killed there have been hundreds of unarmed

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

Irish killed.) The plan of the so-called Government is not to suppress murder and restore law and order, but to suppress a people, and to restore over them a lawless domination whose infamies they hate and whose spirit they despise.

## AFTER-NOTE

ALMOST simultaneously with the conclusion of this book, a truce was happily proclaimed in Ireland.

This, and the protracted negotiations which followed, had the effect of making it inadvisable (in the public interest) to publish an account, however non-partisan, of a journey through the country in its stormiest period.

That phase, and the phase succeeding it, have now definitely passed. The book is therefore of necessity retrospective instead of contemporaneous, as was at first intended, but for this very reason it may have an additional interest for the reader. How far have the prophecies and the prognostications, the diagnoses, the recommendations, the hopes and fears expressed in it stood the test of nine months' negotiation?

And isn't any conceivable settlement likely

## A JOURNEY IN IRELAND

to prove less disastrous to the people of Ireland than a relapse into that sinister condition of subterranean manœuvre and assassination now frankly called—War?

W. E.

(1)

THE END

60

B

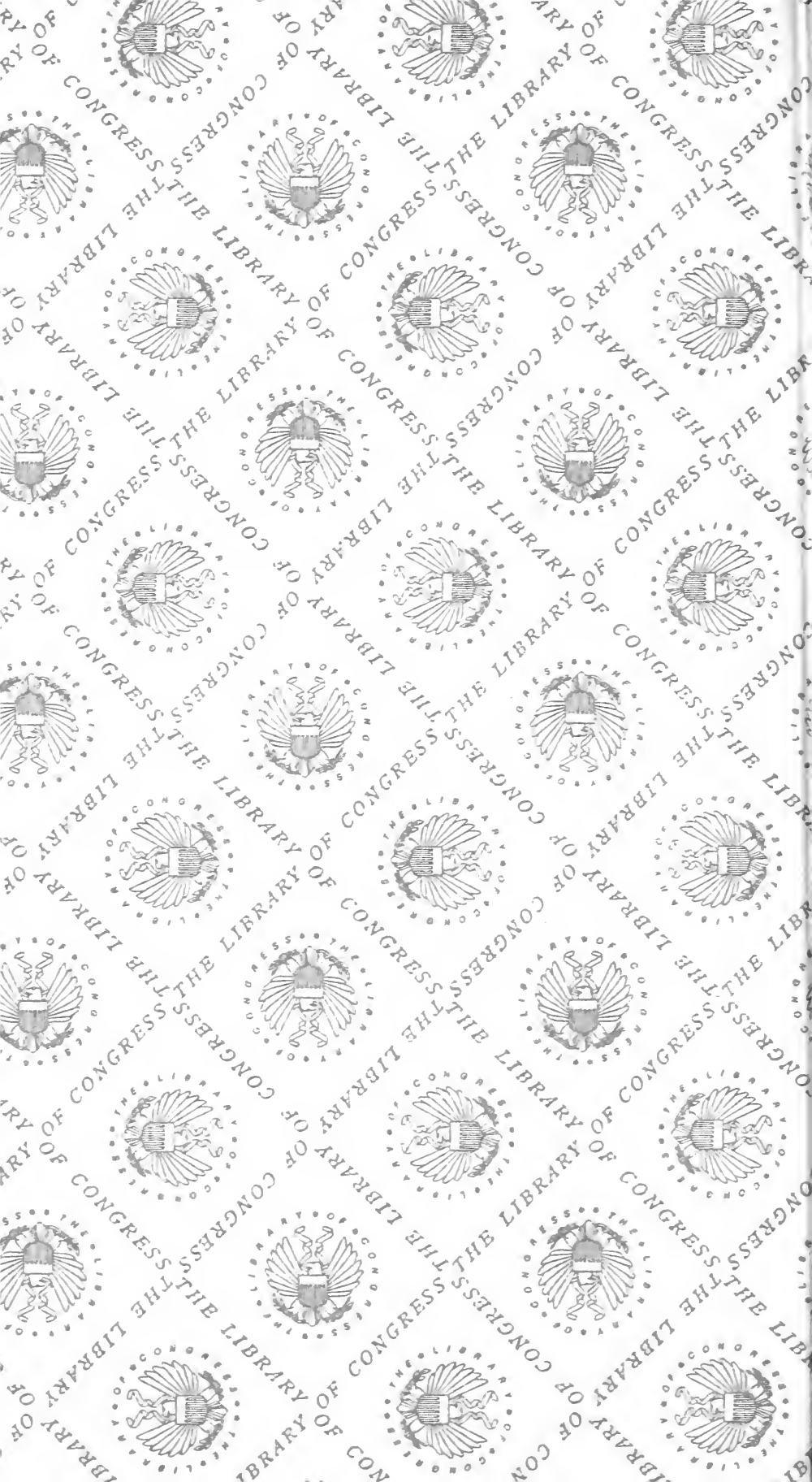
RD - 3.7

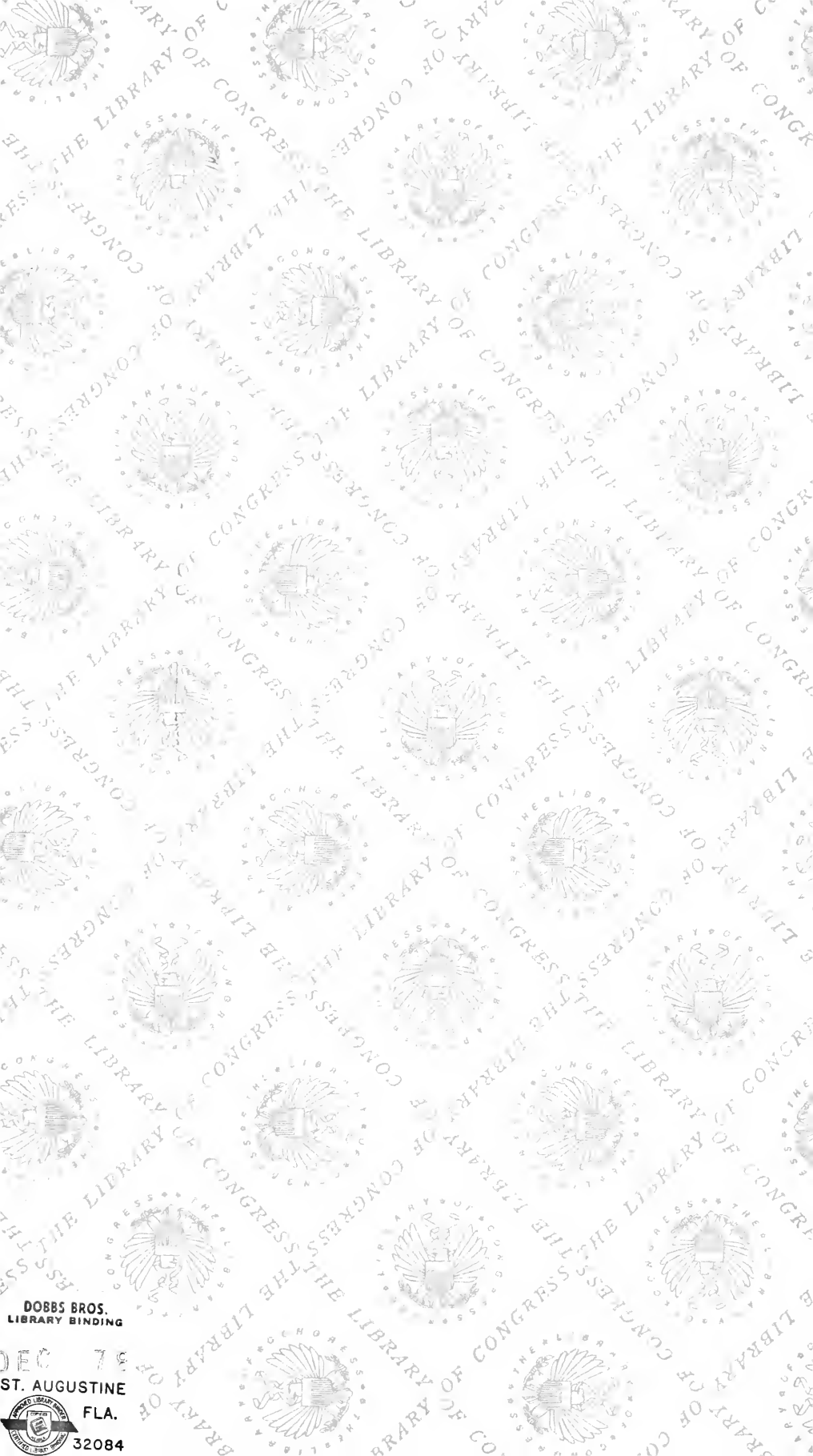












DOBBS BROS.  
LIBRARY BINDING

DEC 19 1951  
ST. AUGUSTINE  
FLA.



32084

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 021 377 714 2